Handbook of Furniture Styles

Walter A. Dyer

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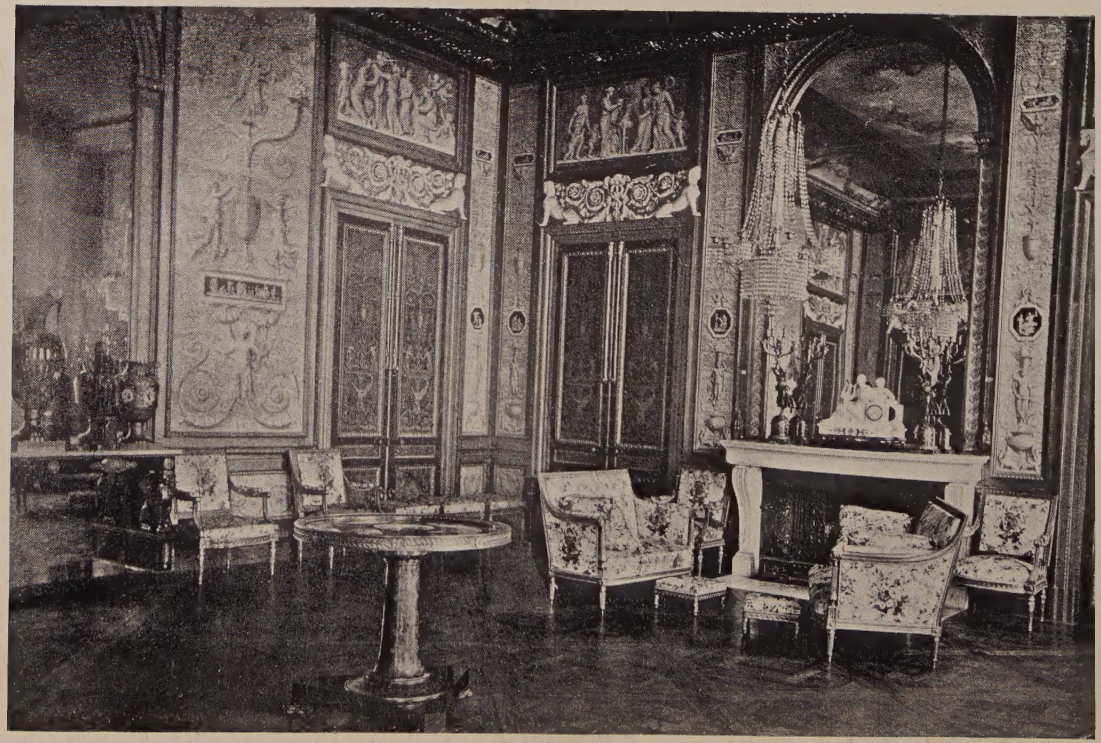

The salon of Marie Antoinette at Fontainebleau, Louis XVI style

Handbook of Furniture Styles

HANDBOOK OF FURNITURE STYLES

BY
WALTER A. DYER
AUTHOR OF "THE LURE OF THE ANTIQUE," "EARLY AMERICAN CRAFTSMEN," "CREATORS OF DECORATIVE STYLES," ETC.

Being an abridged guide to the more important historic styles of furniture, especially intended for ready reference, including chronological tables, bibliography and index.

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FOREWORD

In scanning my library of books on old furniture and period decoration, some of them huge volumes, I have often wondered why no one had ever published a small book of ready reference on the historic furniture styles. Such a volume, I realized, would be necessarily incomplete, its treatment perhaps fragmentary and superficial, and it would possess other obvious defects when viewed either as a standard work of reference or as a readable treatise. It would be necessary, of course, to omit many interesting and important details, and the average author is loath to do this.

But it seemed to me that the unavoidable shortcomings of such a book would be justified by its practical usefulness. A concise, abbreviated survey of the decorative periods would often be most helpful, particularly for those who have not the time or the inclination to study the large books. Something like a concordance of the period styles was what I had in mind. I had reason to believe that there

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was a need for something in the way of a printed guide which would most effectively assist the average person in answering those universally puzzling questions of how to identify any period style or place any piece of furniture, and by what specific means to distinguish one style from another.

I have consequently set aside my principles of scientific accuracy and completeness for the time being, and have made the attempt to produce such a brief survey, *vade mecum*, manual, syllabus, or whatever you may choose to call it. I have presumed to add another volume to an already extensive literature on the furniture styles because I believed that this particular kind of volume would meet a genuine and particular need.

Such condensation of a big subject must inevitably result in sins of omission, if not of commission. I am fully aware of the defects inherent in this sort of treatment; I know just what the critics and reviewers will say; and I am moved to forestall their criticism by certain admissions and disclaimers, and to inform the purchaser of this volume exactly what he is getting for his money.

In the first place, there is nothing new in this book. It does not pretend to be the result of original research. There is not a fact or a conclusion in

it that is not to be found in any one of a dozen larger and handsomer volumes. I do not think I have added one jot to the sum of human knowledge on this subject; I have merely sorted out that knowledge and now present it in a new dress—or undress.

This work does not pretend to be exhaustive, comprehensive, complete. Whole blocks of facts are deliberately omitted. My problem has been one of selection and elimination. I have endeavored to reduce a large, diffuse subject to lowest terms, to boil it down, to strip it to its essentials, and the reader need look for little more than a working outline.

I do not even claim precise accuracy. Absolute truth in these things demands subtle distinctions and fine discriminations which take up space and are often tedious. I have sought to interpret these things more broadly, satisfied with correctness in its larger sense. If I have strained a point now and then in the effort to accentuate the lines of demarcation and the bases of classification, I find my justification in the belief that I have thus simplified what is too often made complicated, and that I have rendered more comprehensible and more easily remembered a matter that many persons tell me they still find confusing.

I have, in short, sacrificed other ends to the single purpose of compiling a small, handy volume on the principal historic furniture styles, in the hope that it will fill the long-felt want for the essential facts presented in quickly available form, and that it may serve as the primer of a fascinating and useful study.

For the convenience of such persons as may be encouraged to delve more deeply into the subject, I shall add at the end of this volume a list of books. It is not a complete list, but it is long enough for all practical purposes, and it includes the works of the leading authorities. To many of these authors I am personally indebted, having consulted their works frequently in the preparation of this handbook.

The greater part of this volume first appeared in the form of magazine articles in "The Art World"; I am indebted to its editors for permission to reprint. A portion of Chapter II appeared originally in "Arts & Decoration." The majority of the illustrations are from photographs of authentic examples of antique furniture in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

W. A. D.

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CHAPTER I

PERIOD FURNITURE IN MODERN HOMES

UNQUESTIONABLY, American homemakers are taking a more and more intelligent interest in the historic styles in furniture. Rapidly have the so-called modern styles and designs of no particular period given place to these historic styles, or what purport to represent them. In fact, the vogue for this sort of thing has been of almost too rapid a growth; it has led to superficial knowledge and slipshod execution. The American purchaser appears willing to pay good prices for period furniture, while his knowledge of the period styles, as well as that of the salesman, is astonishingly slight. I doubt whether he would buy pictures or phonograph records on such slight information—certainly not books or theater tickets or automobiles.

The way this vogue for the historic styles has caught on is impressive to one who follows art movements and similar tendencies. At the present moment the furniture and department stores of New York are displaying almost nothing but period furniture, and window labels and show cards mention the names of Queen Anne or Thomas Chippendale. It has proved to be "good selling stuff."

All this is something we must take account of. To this increased demand for period furniture the manufacturers have responded readily with an increased output of more or less meritorious reproductions of period furniture. Should there not be an equally ready response from those whose business or pleasure it is to disseminate information and try to correct the prevalent American tendency to go wrong in matters artistic?

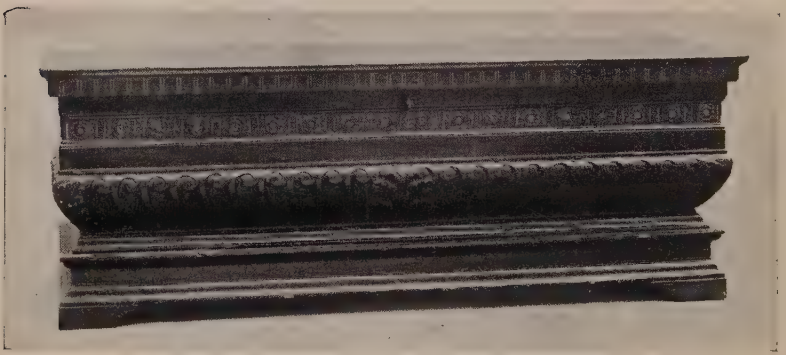
As a matter of fact, something ought to be done, not only because education is always better than ignorance, but because, to put it bluntly, good American dollars are being spent for trash.

I said that the New York stores were displaying period furniture. That was a euphemism. Period furniture it is called, and period furniture it looks like to the uninformed shopper. Some of it, indeed, is period furniture, for there are, of course,

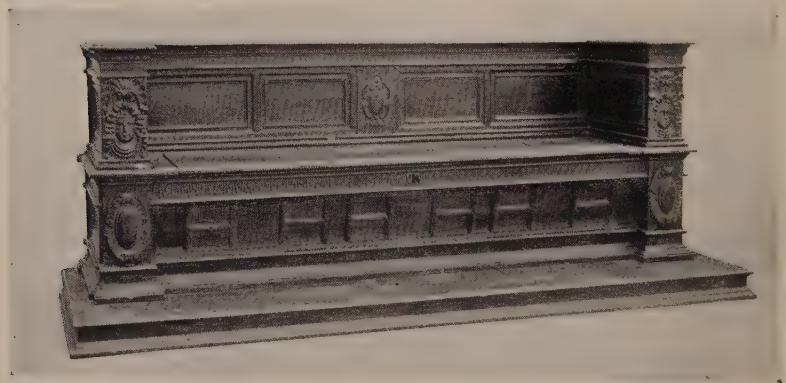
English Gothic oak livery cabinet. Fifteenth century

English oak cabinet with linen-fold carving. Fifteenth century

Italian carved chest. Sixteenth century



Carved marriage chest or cassone. Sixteenth century



Italian carved walnut bench. Sixteenth century

plenty of conscientious, studious, skilful designers, and there are manufacturers who are honest enough and wise enough and possessed of enough of the spirit of craftmanship to impel them to seek for beauty and accuracy in their reproductions, and to tell the truth about them.

The uninformed shopper, alas, has no means of distinguishing between the products of the honest and careful manufacturer and those of the other sort. When I look into New York shop windows and observe, beautifully displayed, the usual sort of reproduction that is two fifths period style and three fifths the joint product of a Grand Rapids draftsman and an automatic turning lathe, the whole thing gracefully termed a William and Mary dining-room suite, I sometimes wonder what the more particular Englishmen or Frenchmen must think of us. For a large portion of the so-called period furniture displayed in our stores is just that—a hybrid, mongrel style, with just enough historic details to produce a sort of off-hand resemblance to the genuine thing, compounded with the most casually designed and executed machine work showing neither taste nor imagination.

Permit me to remark, parenthetically, that my reference to Grand Rapids was not intended as a

slur upon the fair name of that city. For Grand Rapids has become not only the greatest furniture producing center in the world, but it is rapidly becoming something very like an art center, so far as applied art is concerned. Time was when the art of Grand Rapids was a joke, but she has outgrown the days of Mission furniture and crude imitations and is probably producing as much fine furniture to-day—true to type, beautifully designed and honestly executed—as any city in the world.

But Grand Rapids and other cities where furniture is made are continually producing so-called period furniture that is just wrong enough to be dangerous. In proportion, workmanship, and finish, it may even be very good furniture, but it is not what it purports to be. It finds a ready customer in the man or woman of fairly good taste who almost knows what the historic styles are, but not quite.

I do not mean to intimate that one should purchase nothing but genuine antiques; there wouldn't be enough to go around, even if we could all afford them. Our homes are the more beautiful because of the reproduction of historic styles by modern manufacturers. Nor must every piece be an exact copy of an authentic antique. The requirements of modern life call for pieces of furniture that were not

made in Jacobean or Georgian days. But it is quite possible for a well-equipped designer to fashion a library or bedroom suite, for example, in which every detail is authentic, and which exemplifies the true spirit of the period that it seeks to represent. This, indeed, requires greater skill than mere copying, and not all designers possess that skill. The result is the mass of near-period furniture of which I have been speaking.

Now what shall we do about it, since we cannot hope to reform the manufacturers? Shall we go on buying it, flattering ourselves that we have the real thing? Or shall we learn to discriminate between the true and the not-quite-true? Furniture of this type should last a lifetime. Shall we condemn ourselves to a life-long association with styles that are essentially counterfeit?

This is not an argument for or against the use of period furniture. The fact is that the historic styles are popular, and furniture which claims to be true to type is being constantly bought and sold. If we desire period furniture in our homes, let it be genuine in design.

How can we be sure of what we are getting? We cannot depend on a salesman's say-so. He may be honest, but no better posted than we are. Our only

safeguard is a more thorough education along these lines, and the time to get this education is before purchasing, not after. When purchasers are at last able to distinguish for themselves between the true and the false, the manufacturers will be forced into line, and we shall find less of the pseudo-period styles in our shops.

The average American likes a quick and easy path to knowledge, but that is not the way to become familiar with the essentials of the historic styles. One must visit museums and make a study of authentic examples. One must read books on the subject—of which many good ones have been printed. One must study the illustrations in these books until one can recognize at a glance the period of a piece, as one recognizes the make of a motor car by the shape of the hood or the proportions of the body. Then, when one sees a chair or a table in a shop window, one can tell at a glance whether or not it possesses the fundamental characteristics of the style indicated on the label.

It must not be expected that this handbook will supply that education in tabloid form. The chapters which follow are intended rather to serve as a sort of primer to the complete study, or as a guide and ready reference for the refreshment of memory.

CHAPTER II

ITALIAN RENAISSANCE
(1400–1600)

THE furniture styles of the Italian Renaissance deserve particular attention, partly because they form the starting-point and source of inspiration of all the succeeding styles, and partly because of the recently reawakened interest in the period for its own sake. Genuine Italian Renaissance furniture—and, indeed, some the authenticity of which is open to doubt—is bringing fabulous prices to-day, while reproductions in this style are becoming increasingly popular.

The Renaissance was a period marked by the revival of learning, a general emergence from the conditions of the Dark Ages, and new life in all branches of culture and art. This revival of learning produced a new interest in Greek and Roman antiquities. Peace, following long wars, reigned in Italy during this period and made it possible for the nobles and men of wealth to become patrons of the arts.

The Renaissance movement was European in scope, but it had its beginning, focus, and highest development in Italy. New life was injected into almost every field of endeavor. There was a veritable outburst of intellectual energy, from which sprang discoveries, inventions, and the development and dissemination of ideas. "During that period," says John Addington Symonds, "the entire nation (Italy) seemed to be endowed with an instinct for the beautiful and with the capacity for producing it in every form." Another writer has termed this awakening "an exhibition of emancipated modern genius, fired and illuminated by the masterpieces of the past." It was a natural, joyous, free feeling, expressed in every field, a liberation of ideas marked by originality and spontaneity, guided but untrammeled by the traditions of antiquity. The creative impulse was supreme; it was a Golden Age of achievement.

Architecture was the basis and guide of furniture design, and Italian architecture may be divided roughly into periods, as follows: 1100 to 1400, Byzantine, Romanesque, Lombardic, Gothic; 1400 to 1500, early or free Renaissance; 1500 to 1600, high or classic Renaissance; 1600 to 1700, baroque or rococo Renaissance and the Decadenza. The

Gothic, never very firmly established in Italy, was supplanted by a Romanesque or pseudo-classic, and the first impulses of the Renaissance movement were felt in the fourteenth century, called in Italy the trecento. This was followed in the quattro-cento by a more definite return to the classic feeling, under such leaders as Luca della Robia and Filippo Brunelleschi. Then came a purer adaptation of the classic during the cinque-cento, or sixteenth century, which had its culmination in the architecture of Andrea Palladio of Vicenza (1518–1580).

It was during the sixteenth century that the arts flourished luxuriantly, and the styles became imbued with the spirit of the antique, albeit original and based upon a genuinely creative impulse. In 1494 Leonardo da Vinci was appointed Director of Painting and Architecture in the Academy by the Duke of Milan, and he began at once to introduce Greek and Roman styles. Excavations of Roman and Tuscan ruins disclosed antique works of art that aroused extraordinary interest. Leo X became Pope in 1513, and the powerful Medici family, of which he was a member, patronized and encouraged the movement. Great artists arose, whose names will ever be associated with the Renaissance—Michael Angelo, Titian, Andrea del Sarto, Raphael Sanzio, Correg-

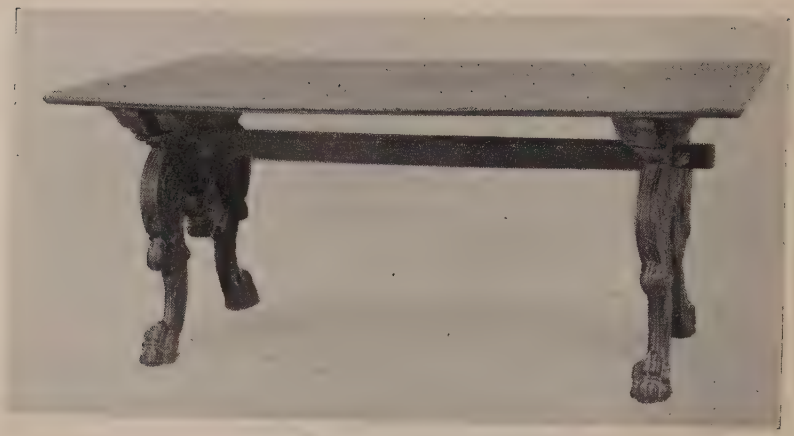
gio, and others. Palladio studied ancient architecture and built new palaces; Benvenuto Cellini and Lorenzo Ghiberti designed and fashioned masterpieces in gold, silver, and bronze; wonderful tapestries were woven, and an era of artistic activity set in which lasted throughout the century, to be followed at last by the inevitable decadence.

The classic spirit, which effected so great a change in architecture, was further exemplified in the form and ornamentation of furniture. Carved woodwork became the vogue in interiors, and the furniture styles followed this lead. Cabinet-making became an honored craft. The furniture was nearly as architectural in type as that of the Gothic period—massive, and following architectural lines. Columns and pilasters were a feature. Cabinets and paneling took on the forms of temples and palaces, the fronts of cupboards and presses often representing temple façades. The furniture was better placed in the rooms and assumed a greater individuality. It was in the ornamentation, however, especially the carving, that the Renaissance spirit found its fullest expression.

The wealthy nobles of Florence, Milan, Rome, Venice, and other cities began to desire more sumptuous furnishings for their new homes, and elaborate

High-backed Italian armchair, upholstered with velvet. Early seventeenth century

Sixteenth century Italian curule or Savonarola chair with brocade upholstery



Typical Italian table of the sixteenth century

Florentine sideboard or credence, sixteenth century

and handsome chests, cabinets, tables, chairs, and other furniture were made for them. Artists and cabinet-makers from other countries went to learn at the feet of the Italian masters, so that furniture made then or soon after in Spain, France, Flanders, Germany, and to some extent in England, is sometimes not easily distinguished from that of Italy. The spirit and styles of the Italian Renaissance swept across the continent.

In general, the style of this furniture was palatial, rather than domestic, in character. Florence led in a vivacious but dignified treatment of classic details. Sense of line and proportion was innate in the Florentine school, and even color was subordinated to form, though the wealth of ornamental detail was not to be suppressed. Venetian furniture was, if anything, even more richly elaborate.

The cabinet-makers of the Renaissance, with their impulse toward finely wrought carving, partially abandoned the coarse-grained oak, which was the commonest material of the Gothic period, and began to use walnut, chestnut, and other woods. In the matter of ornament, carving assumed the first importance, and some of it was masterly. The standard of workmanship was high. The decorative styles lagged somewhat behind the architecture,

and Gothic details persisted more or less until the true classic revival of the sixteenth century.

The lives of saints came to play a less prominent part in the carving, and the pagan element crept in. Mythological, allegorical, and historical subjects became popular, and that skilful combination of purely decorative scroll-work and pictorial form which we have come to associate with the Renaissance style. Symmetry and balance were guiding principles. The details included the fret, the arabesque, the anthemion, the acanthus, the scroll, the cartouche or pierced shield, conventionalized fruit and flowers, the dolphin, the human figure, and fanciful, half-human forms. The carving became more and more intricate, in both high and low relief, and finally fantastic, until the baroque tendency became predominant and Italy handed the scepter of furniture design to France.

Some of this Renaissance furniture was also enriched with inlay. Ivory and bone, sometimes engraved, let into ebony, walnut, and rosewood, had been popular for more than a century in Venice. Toward the end of the fourteenth century, Italian cabinet-makers began to copy marble mosaics by means of inlays of natural or dyed woods, scorched and etched with hot sand or iron, and polished with

oils. This form of inlay, at first a specialty of the Certosan monks, was called *intarsia.* All sorts of designs were wrought in this medium, at first geometrical and floral in type, and later elaborately pictorial. Remarkable skill in workmanship was displayed. Some of the patterns were picked out with ivory and mother-of-pearl and lined with metal threads. Ivory was also carved and applied in bas-relief, or inlaid in elaborate arabesques. Tortoise-shell, brass, mother-of-pearl, and even silver medallions were used to enrich cabinets and caskets. Painting, gilding, and veneering were all employed, the carving on furniture being sometimes picked out with gold, producing a sumptuous effect. Some pieces were ornamented with stucco or covered with colored and gilded *gesso.*

During the sixteenth century the Italian metal-workers were at the height of their powers, and coffers, chests, and other pieces of furniture were mounted with wonderfully wrought steel, iron, brass, and bronze. In the same century *pietra dura* became the fashion—an inlay of highly polished agates, rare marbles, hard pebbles, lapis-lazuli, and other stones.

The interior woodwork of the period was noteworthy. Italian walnut was much used—carved,

paneled, and sometimes ornamented with gilding and *gesso*. The ceilings were vaulted and coffered. The walls were usually hung with fabrics, above a paneled wainscot. There were rich brocades and Genoese velvets, softer and richer than the glaring colors of the Gothic period, and also stamped and gilded leather. In the sixteenth century the famous Renaissance tapestries came into use.

The cabinet became one of the most important pieces of furniture in the homes of the period, and one of the most imposing. It was always a thing of dignity. Large, sometimes monumental in their proportions, and richly carved or inlaid, these cabinets often displayed great magnificence and artistic skill. They were decidedly architectural in form, sometimes being designed with the steps and columns of a temple. At first their outlines often followed those of Roman arches and sarcophagi, but later they were modified, and those of the sixteenth century exhibit considerable grace and variety. Toward the end they became over-elaborate and even bizarre.

Chairs were, naturally, an important item in the Renaissance household, and during the sixteenth century they became fairly abundant. Those that have come down to us are chiefly of the high-backed and the curule forms. The high-backed chairs were

huge and stately, richly carved and handsome, with perpendicular backs, flat, square seats, and arms. They could scarcely have been considered comfortable. They were made of oak, walnut, and other woods, without upholstery, though cushions of leather, silk, and velvet were used with them.

The curule chair, or faldstool *(faldisterium)*, sometimes called the Savonarola chair, was smaller and more comfortable. It was fashioned on a Roman model, in the form of a curved X, and was frequently constructed as a folding chair. It became especially popular in Florence and Venice during the sixteenth century, where it was often made of Italian walnut, carved and sometimes gilded, and frequently furnished with a back and seat of stretched velvet or leather, or with a wooden seat upon which a cushion was placed. Toward the end of the century, chairs were occasionally upholstered in silk, tapestry, brocade, or leather, and there was a stiff, rather ugly, all-wood chair. Carved stools and settees were also common in the homes of the period.

The tables of the Renaissance were less stiff and ugly than those which had preceded them. The typical Renaissance table was oblong and supported at the ends by solid carved and shaped supports or consoles, often terminating in large claw or scroll

feet, and usually connected by a heavy stretcher or a lower shelf, upon which smaller supports sometimes rested. These tables were often made so high as to seem impractical from the modern point of view. They were frequently richly embellished with inlay and gilding as well as carving. The tops were thick planks, or sometimes slabs of marble or Florentine mosaic.

Coffers and chests were common adjuncts, particularly the *cassone*, or marriage chest, intended for the trousseau and wedding gifts. It was the lineal descendant of the medieval chest, and was made of solid walnut or chestnut, sometimes oak, and occasionally of cypress or camphor wood. Some examples are shaped like sarcophagi; others have perpendicular sides and ends. Some are carved with scrolls and figures; others are painted and gilded or ornamented with *intarsia* and fine *gesso* work. Often they are masterpieces of ornament. There was also a higher form of chest, called a *bahut*.

These are the principal pieces of furniture that interest the collector. Elaborately carved buffets and credences are sometimes to be seen. Several new forms were introduced about 1600, adding greater variety to the home furnishings, though less admirable in their workmanship—serving-tables

and sideboards, chests of drawers and dressers for the bedroom, couches, bookcases, and writing-tables or desks. The beds were heavy, having commonly a roof supported on four columns, and existing examples are rare.

Mirrors of polished steel, with metal or richly carved and gilded frames are among the extant treasures of the period, and some of them are exquisite examples of design and craftsmanship. Glass mirrors were not introduced until later, the first ones coming from Venice. Italian Renaissance bellows, wall-brackets, candlesticks, and other small objects, often richly carved, though sometimes too ornate, are also much sought by connoisseurs. Such clocks as were used were small and usually had metal cases, inlaid with ivory, horn, mother-of-pearl, and lapis-lazuli. There were also screens of stamped and painted Spanish leather.

Chimneypieces, while they can hardly be classed as furniture, have sometimes been taken from the old palaces, and in many cases represent the flower of Renaissance design and carving.

With the exception of the Savonarola chairs and the mirrors, and possibly an occasional table, cabinet, or chest, Italian Renaissance furniture is scarcely suited to actual use in the modern home. Most of

it should be preserved in museums, where students of art and the development of decorative styles may have access to it.

It is not to be assumed that all of it is admirable or worthy of equal praise. There were good and bad workmen in those days, as there are now. Some authentic pieces display unpardonable extravagance or poor workmanship, while the furniture of the later Renaissance shows a tendency toward confusion of ideas, over-ornamentation, and other marks of approaching decadence. But no artistic education is complete, in the field of decorative and applied art, without some knowledge of the best work of the carvers and cabinet-makers of the Italian Renaissance.

CHAPTER III

THE RENAISSANCE ELSEWHERE

(1500–1650)

I HAVE begun with the Italian Renaissance because it is of prime importance. Before proceeding, however, it may be well to take a hasty glance at the styles of an even earlier era. The furniture of those ancient times now in existence may be considered negligible. It is but remotely related to our modern styles. The student of the history of ornament, however, must take cognizance of many diverse styles, some of them primitive in type, in order to round out his subject. Oriental ornament—Chinese, Persian, etc.—as well as Scandinavian, Celtic, etc., all played a part in the general evolution of decorative styles.

Period decoration, however, as exemplified in the furniture styles of Europe, shows a fairly direct development from ancient Egypt to modern America. The antique Egyptian had a recrudescence in both France and England in the time of Napoleon, and it formed the basis of some of the art of Greece. Its

decorative features included the column and entablature, the papyrus, lotus, palm, sphinx, and scarab.

With classic Greek and Roman architecture we are fairly familiar; we are always harking back to it. The decorative styles of Greece and Rome were adapted by the style creators of the Italian Renaissance and by the promoters of succeeding classic revivals. Allied to the Greco-Roman was the Pompeian style, one of the most beautiful of all the classic types. Its origin, in turn, was partly Egyptian. It employed the pillar, the pilaster, the carved support, the panel, the fluted column, and, on the furniture, modeled bronze. Wonderful use of color in interiors was an outstanding feature.

Then came the decadence of the Dark Ages and the gradual emergence therefrom. In southern Europe during the tenth to the fourteenth centuries we have the slow development of the Saracenic and Byzantine styles. The Byzantine, following the Roman, had its center in Constantinople. In the north we find the Romanesque and Gothic.

These styles found expression chiefly in architecture. After the Roman and Pompeian, the Gothic was the first to make itself vitally felt in furniture design. The Gothic school originated in northern France and its influence spread over a large part of

Europe, reaching its highest development in the fourteenth century.

Gothic furniture was plain in form and architectural in character. Simple lines predominated, the decorative element being supplied by carving and pierced tracery. Much of it was built into the walls; the rest was cumbersome and heavy. In England, Germany, and the Low Countries oak was the principal wood employed; in France, chestnut; in Italy, walnut; in Spain, cypress.

The carving was of a conventional, geometric character, but satisfying in its rendition. There is an undeniable charm about the best of the Gothic carving. The chief motifs were the pointed arch, the trefoil and quatrefoil, the wheel, the rose, and the linen-fold.

The furniture was still simple and somewhat crude, but was gradually gaining in variety and mobility. The chest or coffer was a prominent article from the first, often being elaborately carved. Cupboards, cabinets, armoires, and buffets came into use, and the bedstead became a more important affair. Plain trestle-tables were followed by those that displayed some attempt at ornament. Chairs were still few, and were only used on state occasions. They were heavy and majestic. A noteworthy ex-

tant example is the coronation chair at Westminster Abbey, which is of carved oak and was built about 130. For the most part, stools, forms, and benches were used, some plain and some ornamented with carving. The common people continued content with the rudest kind of tables, chests, and stools, of no style at all.

In England during the fifteenth century, when the Renaissance movement had already begun in Italy, we find a transition or late Gothic style, characterized by too much ornament. The cinquefoil and tongue of flame were added to the decorative motifs. The furniture was rather extravagant in style—less worthy, in fact, than that of the previous century. Well-constructed presses and cupboards and ornate chairs and bedsteads are among the pieces that have been preserved. At last the spirit of the Renaissance touched England, having already inspired France and Spain, and the era of practical, movable furniture was inaugurated, in which there was manifest the effort to combine comfort and beauty.

The powerful influence of the Italian Renaissance, which affected the applied arts of all Europe sooner or later, made itself felt in France during the reigns of Charles VIII and Louis XII (1453–1515), and

French credence of the late fifteenth century, with fine Gothic tracery and linen-fold carving

A Flemish Renaissance cabinet of ebony with bone inlay. About 1600

French Renaissance carved chest. Sixteenth century

Carved walnut table. French Renaissance, 1550–1600

formed the dominant note in French decorative styles, with some changes, up to the close of the reign of Louis XIII. This was the period of the French Renaissance. It has sometimes been divided into four epochs or sub-periods, as follows: transition, Charles VIII to Louis XII, 1453–1515; early Renaissance, François I, 1515–1547; decline, Henri II, to Henri IV, 1547–1610; later Renaissance, Louis XIII, 1610–1643.

The first of these four epochs witnessed the beginnings of the new awakening. A freely ornamented Gothic remained the predominant style. The reign of François I was a period of great artistic development in France, during which the Renaissance movement came into full flower. Architecture, furniture design, and interior decoration all felt this impulse. The king encouraged the adoption of the Italian styles and sent to Italy for such great artists and craftsmen as Leonardo da Vinci, Andrea del Sarto, Seralio, and Benvenuto Cellini. The Gobelins established their tapestry works about this time. François finished building Fontainebleau and commenced the Louvre, employing the services of da Vinci, del Sarto, and others. The French nobles followed their monarch's lead, building châteaux in

the Italian style and supplying them with furniture constructed after Italian models—some of it of excellent workmanship.

In the main, the woodwork of François I was patterned after the Italian, but the ornamentation was lighter, the carving more open and less conservative. The French chairs were somewhat more graceful and lighter than those of Italy, with the same type of carving, but often with spiral or turned rungs, legs, and supports. Still, they were solid and of generous proportions. Oak was first used, then walnut. The use of cushions was followed by upholstery and a tendency toward greater comfort and luxury. The seats of the chairs were broad, the legs straight, and the backs not as high as those of Italy. Other pieces followed Italian models more or less closely. Chests and cabinets became less architectural in character and were sometimes furnished with drawers.

The reign of Henri II (1547–1559) was even more productive in the realm of the industrial arts —furniture, textiles, faience, and book-bindings. The furniture was distinguished by wonderful carving, the cabinets being especially notable. The strap and band, the pierced shield, arabesque, lozenge, and flat cartouche were introduced as design motifs.

During the next four reigns (François II, Charles IX, Henri III, Henri IV) a sort of decline or wearying of the art impulse set in. Henri IV (1589–1610) endeavored to revive it, but for the time being its force seemed to have been spent, and the styles were marked by meaningless and illogical changes. The shell came into prominence as a detail of ornament, the forerunner of rococo *(rocaille et coquille*, rock and shell).

There followed a rise in the artistic curve during the reign of Louis XIII (1610–1643), when Cardinal Richelieu was prime minister and Simon Vouet a leader in the art world. Life became more luxurious and the demand for fine home furnishings more general. The styles of ornament became more varied, with much scroll and shell carving.

Vouet's furniture was of the Italian type, with much florid ornament—the heavily scrolled cartouche, fancy pilasters, ponderous garlands and swags of fruit and flowers, and fantastic shells. Other designers followed the Flemish school and displayed greater restraint.

An increasing variety of forms appeared; there were more kinds of furniture made for every-day use. Many forms of chairs and sofas became common, and the divan and console were products of this

reign. The chairs, as a rule, were more comfortable, and were more commonly used for ordinary domestic purposes. Sometimes they were made in sets, and were usually upholstered in velvet, brocade, tapestry, and needlework. Bedroom furniture became more luxurious. The walls were commonly decorated with ornamental friezes above paneled wainscots.

The styles of the German, Spanish, and Flemish Renaissance were all closely related. The movement gained strength in Holland and Flanders later than in France. Margaret of Austria became governor of the Netherlands in 1507, and introduced the Italian styles and Italian workmen, but the Flemish Renaissance was at its best after 1600. Before that Italian models were copied; afterward the Low Countries established a Renaissance style of their own, which was interpreted by talented designers and wonderful wood-workers. Remarkable carving was done, including figure work of a high order. At first oak was the only medium employed; later ebony and other woods were introduced.

Flemish furniture of the seventeenth century was excellent in design and workmanship, and exerted a powerful influence over England. For example, a chair that was adopted in both France and England, with high back, carved top and underbrace, and cane

panels—the typical chair of the English Restoration period—was of purely Spanish-Flemish origin. Another characteristic article of the Flemish Renaissance was a massive wardrobe with handsomely carved doors.

During the seventeenth century Holland contributed a taste for fine marquetry. The patterns became freer, less severe, and the use of colored woods richer and more varied. Mother-of-pearl and ivory were added, after the Italian manner. Exquisite at first, this Dutch marquetry later became florid, gaudy, and fantastic. Meanwhile the rural districts were producing a simple form of painted furniture that was hardly less interesting.

Germany, under the leadership of Albrecht Dürer, reluctantly abandoned the Gothic during the sixteenth century and followed Flanders in a freer treatment of carving.

In Spain the Moorish feeling, based on the Saracenic, was stronger than the Gothic. During the sixteenth century artists were imported from France and Flanders, but the Moorish elements persisted, dwelling side by side with the Renaissance. During the seventeenth century, however, the Renaissance styles were predominant in furniture design. The nobles were rich, and the art industries were

encouraged. Fine needlework and tooled leather were produced.

The lustrous Spanish chestnut became the chief furniture material, with some cedar, cypress, and pine. The art of inlaying with ebony, ivory, etc., was introduced from Flanders. Cabinets of chestnut were richly ornamented with repoussé plaques of silver and later of tortoise-shell, ebony, and rare woods from the tropics. Elaborate desks and other pieces were manufactured. The Flemish form of high-backed chair was modified. It commonly had hoof feet and a solid back of dark-brown Cordova leather, stamped and studded with brass nails and mounts. This, like the original Flemish form, was imported into England about 1660.

The Renaissance movement, strictly speaking, was less marked in England than on the Continent, but there was a gradual development of styles during the Tudor period which parallels it. Roughly, English furniture may be divided into that of the age of oak, lasting until about 1660; the age of walnut, 1660 till about 1725; and the age of mahogany, to the beginning of the nineteenth century. That is the first broad division. Up to the close of the Cromwellian period oak was the predominant wood in English furniture. The earliest furniture was

crude and heavy and included only such articles as were essential to domestic life—chests, tables, benches, beds, and occasionally, chairs.

Emerging from the crudities and limitations of the Gothic period, English furniture yet retained the Gothic traditions of sturdiness and virility for many years, until Continental influences, which at first refined it, led it at length into the extravagance of the French rococo.

First, to summarize the dates: The Norman and Gothic periods covered, roughly, the years 1066 to 1485. The Tudor period included the reigns of Henry VII (1485–1509), Henry VIII, contemporary with the Renaissance movement (1509–1547), Edward VI (1547–1553), Mary (1553–1558), and Elizabeth (1558–1603). This last half century is sometimes referred to as the Elizabethan period.

Henry VIII, who was an anti-Papist, desired a change from the Gothic styles which he associated with Catholic ecclesiastical architecure. He brought John of Padua from Italy and installed him as court architect. John was doubtless full of the spirit of the Italian Renaissance, but the king's attitude was negative, rather than positive—anti-Gothic, rather than pro-Renaissance—and the Renaissance movement was of slow growth in England. Holbein,

who lived in England from 1526 to 1543, was responsible for the introduction of Flemish Renaissance ideas, such as florid and graceful carving and inlay of scroll-work with elegant leafage and figures.

The styles of the early Tudor period (1509–1558) show a mixture of Gothic survivals, with Italian, Flemish, and French importations, all more or less modified. It was a less plastic, less imaginative style than that of Italy. It was a sort of emasculated Renaissance. Henry VIII and his followers appear to have caught something of the decorative idea, but not the idea of comfort, and England was only half-awake to the art impulse of the Renaissance.

The familiar linen-fold motif, a substitute for perpendicular Gothic lines, was introduced into England, probably from France or Flanders, as early as the fifteenth century, and is found on Gothic work. It now appeared with Tudor details on chests, choir-stalls, footboards of beds, etc. The acanthus was introduced from Italy, and also the cartouche and the *guillouche*, a strap ornament forming a succession of circles. There were also Italian furniture forms and terminal shapes.

After 1536 the coarser German and Flemish features became more common than the Italian. There

English oak court cupboard, with carved bulb-form supports. About 1575–1600

English oak wainscot chair, carved with the Tudor rose. Sixteenth century

A Louis XIV armchair of the middle period, with curved legs and curved underbraces. Gilded wood and tapestry

A Louis XIV armchair with seat and back of cane, which was less common than upholstery

was a greater variety of formal strap-work, more turned work, diamond shapes superimposed on square panels, and panel work made up of mouldings. Other details were the Tudor rose, the dolphin, the lion's head, round portrait medallions, series of round-headed arches, and a semi-circular or fan pattern.

These details were employed largely in church interiors, as well as on wall panels and movable furniture. The cabinet was a prominent piece of furniture. There is a remarkable example in the South Kensington Museum in the form of a Roman triumphal arch, like some of the Italian cabinets. It is chiefly of pear wood, enriched with carving and inlay of the German type in a profusion of detail. The tables were plain trestle affairs, often covered with an embroidered cloth or carpet. Chairs were rare, and were used only by the master and mistress of the house, other persons using more or less crude settles, benches, forms, and stools, usually of oak, occasionally of ebony. The chairs were heavy and solid, with straight backs and flat, wooden seats, sometimes furnished with cushions of embroidered velvet or other stuffs. There were also huge, elaborate beds and wonderfully carved oaken chests. The main room of the private house was usually furnished

with a *dressoir*, or service-cupboard for drinking-vessels, etc., a chair or two, some stools and benches, and a board on trestles.

It was during the prosperous reign of Elizabeth that something like a Renaissance movement developed. It was an era marked by a revival of interest in learning and the arts, by literary production, and by social, political, and commercial progress. The furniture styles took on a more distinctive character. There was less of the Gothic feeling, more attempt at originality. Occasionally pure Italian or French Renaissance work give evidence of the presence of imported craftsmen, but there was actually less of the Italian feeling than formerly; the style was becoming more distinctly British. Both Flemish and English carvers were widely employed; the material was chiefly oak, the carving being in rather high relief.

Among the decorative details introduced during this period were heraldic motifs in the carving, the diamond or lozenge on the backs of chairs and the panels of chests and cupboards, and designs embodying fruit, foliage, and flowers. There were occasionally Renaissance pedestals or terminals in the form of human busts, tapering down to a foot. The bulb, drum, or melon form, often carved with gad-

roon ornaments, frequently appeared on table-legs, bed-posts, and cupboard-supports. The linen-fold motif gave place generally to scroll- and strap-work, sometimes elaborately interlaced and carved in low relief. Turned work also became somewhat popular.

Interior decoration received increasing attention. The oak paneling of the walls was often elaborate and handsome, and there were highly ornamental and often massive chimneypieces. Tapestries were used more and more.

Chairs were not yet common, but there were some curule-shaped chairs of Italian derivation, wooden-seated armchairs with much turned work, and heavy, straight-backed, carved wainscot-chairs. Joint stools and forms continued in use, bearing an increasing amount of turned and carved ornament.

The Tudor board-and-trestle table was followed in Elizabeth's time by a longer, narrower, more ornate style, with four heavy legs of an exaggerated baluster form, often with a bulbous carving halfway down. The legs were joined by heavy rails, or struts, near the floor.

Cupboards became more common, the styles verging upon the court and press cupboards of the Jacobean period. There were many forms of chests, and

great, canopied, four-post bedsteads. Mirrors were introduced about this time.

The styles that followed were so much an outgrowth of these that some knowledge of the Renaissance period is necessary for a clear understanding of the rest. The later styles, however, are the ones which chiefly concern us, for it is upon them that our modern styles are based. Beginning, then, with the style of Louis XIV in France and the Jacobean period in England, we will proceed with a somewhat more detailed study.

CHAPTER IV

LOUIS XIV
(1643–1715)

IT is not an easy matter to epitomize briefly the salient characteristics of the French decorative periods, but we shall render our task a little less difficult if we omit the earlier periods which were sketchily touched upon in Chapter III. There is justification for this, for Americans have been mainly interested in four of the French periods—Louis XIV, Louis XV, Louis XVI, and the Empire—and these are the only ones that exert an influence on the furniture design of to-day. It would be well, however, for the student to know something of that source of great inspiration in the arts, the Renaissance, for the later styles are best understood when that background is kept in view.

The art impulse was reawakened during the reign of Louis XIII, and this paved the way for a sort of second French Renaissance that held sway during the reigns of Louis XIV, Louis XV, and Louis XVI,

and exerted a powerful influence over the contemporary arts of England and the Low Countries.

During these three periods furniture was produced that was more readily adaptable to modern needs than any that had gone before and that reached a higher plane of artistic excellence. They are represented by three distinct styles marking a definite development. The Louis XIV style is marked by dignity, grandeur, bold effects, lavish but not excessive ornament, and faultless workmanship. In the decoration the conventionalized anthemion and acanthus were prominent, and the ornamental details were symmetrical and balanced. The Louis XV period marked the culmination of the rococo period of design, with the influence of Madame Pompadour paramount. Less attention was paid to proportion and form than to elaboration of detail. The anthemion and acanthus continued to be employed in ornament, but the details were generally unbalanced. Pastoral scenes by Watteau were used in decoration, and rococo details, natural flowers, festoons, baskets, and ribbon and lace effects. The Louis XVI style shows a return to simpler lines and more restrained and delicate ornament, under the influence of Marie Antoinette. Fine marquetry and painting were employed, and a lavish use of dainty

florals. The legs of chairs and tables, generally curved in Louis XV's time, became slender, straight, and tapering.

So much for a general survey of this interesting and productive period.

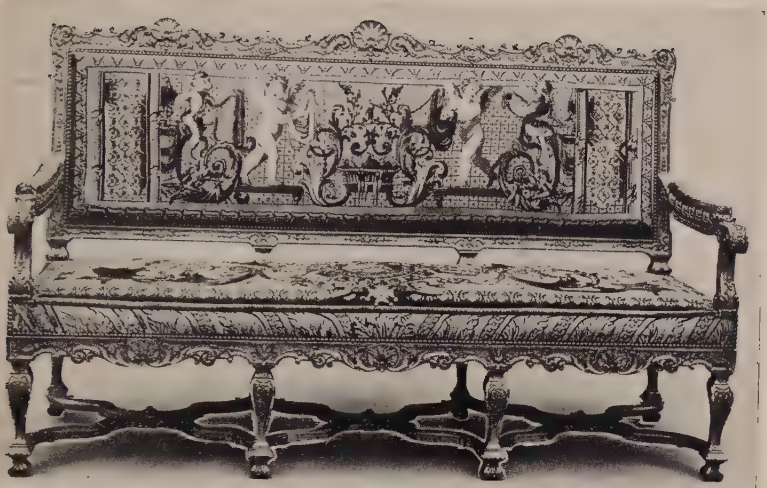
Many historical changes took place during the seventy-two-years' reign of Louis XIV which had a direct effect on the art industries. The influence of the Queen Regent and Cardinal Mazarin during the years of Louis's minority was toward greater luxury, which always means ornateness in decoration. More powerful still was the constructive influence of Jean Baptiste Colbert, Minister of Finance, who became Prime Minister in 1661. Colbert fostered the growing art impulse among the French people and encouraged the art industries. He founded the Academy of Painters and Sculptors, organized the lace industry, and was instrumental in the government purchase of the Gobelin Tapestry Works, at the head of which he placed Charles Le Brun.

As royal works, the Gobelin factory became a powerful influence in the development of style. Le Brun became manager in 1660 and a dictator of style. In 1690 he was succeeded by Mignard. The Beauvais Tapestry Works were also established during this reign, with Louis Hyvart as manager. The

tapestries produced by these two factories were typical of the tastes of the times, and were characterized by pomp and grandeur, with a preference for serious classic and martial subjects.

These things, culminating about 1667, gave direction to the popular impulse and resulted in the crystallization of the Louis XIV style. In 1660 Louis adopted his title of Le Grand Monarque and became a powerful king. He aided Colbert in encouraging the art industries, and gave every opportunity for development to such artists and designers as Daniel Marot, De Espouy, Hardouin Mansart, Noel Coypel, and Le Pautre. Great furniture designers and cabinet-makers were encouraged and thrived, including J. Charles Berain and André Charles Boulle. Boulle was the chief of this group, and his work is stamped on the Louis XIV style in furniture. Le Brun is said to have drawn some of his designs, and Marot worked for him. His furniture is distinguished by wonderful workmanship and lavish ornament. He made use of ormolu and introduced an elaborate marquetry of tortoise-shell and brass which came to be known as Boulle or Buhl work. Shells, scrolls, the acanthus, and the ram's head were among his ornamental details.

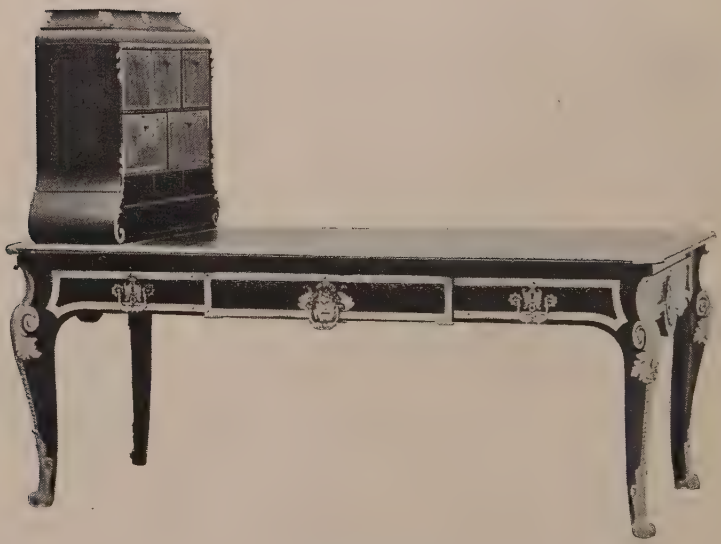
Under royal patronage the palace was built at



A typical Louis XIV sofa upholstered in tapestry, designed in the manner of Berain

A finely carved Louis XIV table of gilded wood with marble top, from the Château de Vaux

Late Louis XIV side chairs of oak with upholstery of Genoese velvet



A Louis XIV table and small cabinet in the style of Boulle, made of ebony with gilt and bronze mounts

Versailles and gardens were laid out by André Le Nôtre. Great artists and designers were employed in the interior decorations and furnishings, and magnificence was the keynote. In some respects, however, the work done at Fontainebleau and the Trianon, and in certain châteaux and private mansions, where a simpler phase of the Louis XIV style is illustrated, forms a safer guide for modern students.

Louis XIV chairs were large and comfortable, being usually upholstered, back and seat, with tapestry, brocade of large pattern, or with ruby velvet enriched with gold galloon. During the first half of the reign the legs of chairs were straight, and turned or carved in a squarish effect, like pedestals. They were furnished with decorative underframing, and were sometimes ornamented with acanthus carving. In general, these chairs were similar to those introduced into England by Daniel Marot, and known to us as William and Mary chairs. Later the chair-legs became curved, similar to the cabriole, still somewhat massive but more graceful. Chair backs departed from the rectilinear and swept upward in a curve. After 1700 the legs became more slender, approaching those of the Louis XV period in style.

The tables had similar turned or pedestal feet, and later had curved legs. Small, round and oblong

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tables and consoles became common. Beds were designed chiefly with a view to supporting elaborate draperies. A couch, called *lit à la duchesse*, gilded, painted, and varnished, made its appearance. Carved and inlaid panels were much used on chests and wardrobes, and there were many forms of chests and cabinets in vogue. One chest was shaped like a sarcophagus, after the Italian Renaissance manner, and was set on carved scroll legs, like a table, with drawers beneath. A common form of cabinet had a serpentine front and carved feet and panels, and was decorated with Buhl work. These are but a few of the numerous forms that appeared during the Louis XIV period.

The chief woods used in cabinet-making were oak, walnut, chestnut, and ebony, with ornamental portions frequently done in rosewood, sandal-wood, tulip-wood, and various exotic woods. There was much gilding, marquetry and carving, with mounts and inlay of onyx, porphyry, lapis-lazuli, ormolu, brass, and colored woods. Gobelin tapestry and Lyons velvet were the principal upholstery materials.

Toward the end of the reign the styles changed, developing toward that of the Louis XV period. The pedestal legs gave place to more slender, curved legs. Elaborate carving became an even more

prominent feature, with a more graceful rococo and more scroll-work. In other respects very similar to the Louis XV style, however, this late Louis XIV work continued to show balanced details, while one of the distinguishing features of the succeeding reign is a balance of harmony, but not of detail.

Throughout the Louis XIV period the great designers continued in their effort to perpetuate the spirit of the Renaissance. It was a distinguished period in the development of French applied art and one worth studying for its own sake, as well as for the sake of a better understanding of the styles that followed.

The Louis XIV style has been somewhat neglected in the past by modern manufacturers of period furniture, who have found the styles of Louis XV and Louis XVI more to their liking. Of late, however, Louis XIV reproductions and adaptations have been placed on the market in increasing numbers, and today the style is enjoying something of a popular vogue, in common with the William and Mary style of England. Its dignity and distinction render it suitable to the more formal rooms in the modern home.

CHAPTER V

LOUIS XV
(1715–1774)

DURING the Louis XV period in France, extending over three score years, there was developed a decorative style that was distinctive. The first eight years are often referred to as the Regency period; they were the years of the king's minority, when Philippe de Bourbon, or Philip of Orleans, acted as regent.

Philip became the leader in matters of French decorative art, and it was he who laid the foundations for the Louis XV style. He took pleasure in upsetting traditions, and established an era of luxury and extravagance. In art, as in life, formality was thrown overboard, and gaiety took the place of the martial pomp of the previous reign.

Under the regent, Louis was brought up to a life of indulgence and ease in the midst of a pleasure-loving court, and it was only natural that his should be a gay and extravagant reign. Among his favorites were the Comtesse du Barry and Madame Pom-

padour, who helped to encourage the gaiety and luxury that affected all the styles of the period, with which their names have always been closely connected.

In many respects it was not an effete period, however; it was far from barren of artistic results. Indeed, it was the most exuberant of the French decorative periods. The state ateliers continued to enjoy royal support and were the centers of artistic production.

The list of clever and talented masters of applied art who flourished during this reign is too long to give in full. Interior decorators, designers, painters, potters, tapestry-weavers, cabinet-makers, and metal-workers coöperated in an extraordinary manner to make this a most productive period. The designers of decorative sculpture exerted a dominating influence. Oudry and then Boucher became director of the Gobelin Tapestry Works, producing wonderful reproductions of paintings in which sylvan and amatory scenes took the place of the martial and classical subjects of the previous reign. Unfortunately for us, many of the delicate colors they used proved not to be permanent. Charles Cressent, who rose to prominence as a decorative sculptor during the Regency, was one of the best designers

and cabinet-makers of the century. Jean Riesener was another Louis XV cabinet-maker of prominence. Jacques Caffieri and Pierre Gouthière, skilful metal-workers and cabinet-makers, added their part to the development of the styles. Lancret and Watteau, painters, embellished the walls and furniture of the period. Meissonnier, a designer, was a leader in the dominant rococo school. He defied the laws of balance, often making one side of a console or cabinet quite different from the other without disturbing the sense of harmony. His work is said to have greatly influenced the English Chippendale. And there were many other masters, including a host of interior decorators.

In 1753 Louis made a royal institution of the Sèvres porcelain factory, adding a new impetus in this field of applied art. Under Madame Pompadour Sèvres porcelain plaques were much used to enrich cabinets, writing-desks, etc.

It was during this reign, too, that the Martin family flourished, and Vernis-Martin lacquer became popular. The Martins were carriage-painters who invented a lacquer finish in imitation of the popular Oriental lacquer, and then developed the more distinctly French Vernis-Martin. Simon Etienne Martin established the Vernis-Martin works

in 1744. This lacquer was made in red, brown, gold, speckled bronze, and even black, and was used on many kinds of furniture, such as tables, cabinets, and elaborate sedan chairs. Watteau and Boucher painted pictures for these Vernis-Martin pieces and also for Vernis-Martin panels, overmantels, and doors.

The later styles of the Louis XIV period gradually merged into those of Louis XV through the medium of the Regency. The taste for curves and rococo details had already made itself felt. The styles of the Louis XV period are marked, in general, by a greater suppleness in the lines of furniture, a more constant use of ornamental metal sculptures, rococo details, and the irregular harmony of related parts.

The Regency style was a medley of mythological, classic, and modern, expressed with much parade and ostentation. The austere and heroic gave place to abandon, frivolity, and extravagance in decorative art. About 1720–25 a strong Chinese influence was felt, both in the increased use of lacquer and in some of the design details.

The Louis XV style proper, however, was a purely French development, built upon the Louis XIV, with very little foreign influence. It was a capricious, whimsical style, exaggerating the late Louis

XIV forms, with a freer use of curves and rococo details. It was a less restrained style than that of Louis XIV, more elegant, and in some ways more graceful. Often, however, it lacked the merit of the previous style, when it carried its extravagance too far.

The dominant decorative motif was the rococo or *rocaille*, used in irregular symmetry with skilful audacity. It was used in combination with ribbon and lace effects, natural flowers and hanging baskets, the broken shell, the twisted acanthus, the curled endive, and the flowing scroll. It was the master metal-worker, Caffieri, who introduced the endive or celery motif to supplant the classic acanthus.

As has been stated, the lack of precise balance in the use of ornament is a distinguishing mark of the Louis XV style. Unbalanced details were introduced during the Regency, and later, under the leadership of Meissonnier, all attempts to have the design alike on both sides of a given center were abandoned. Nevertheless, though the details were different, the effect of balance was retained by skilful arrangement of unlike sections.

These ornamental details were used lavishly in interior woodwork—on cornice, wainscot, mantel, door- and window-casing, and panel- and picture-

Late Louis XIV armchair with curved legs, upholstered in tapestry. The details are balanced

Louis XV armchair of carved walnut, upholstered in brocatelle. Note the unbalanced details in the carving.

Louis XV console of carved and gilded wood, with marble top

A Louis XV table of polished oak with carving typical of the period

frame. Furniture was designed to conform with them. Plain surfaces were avoided, everything being profusely ornamented, chiefly with elaborate mounts of bronze and ormolu, as well as carving.

Toward the end of Louis XV's reign there was a slight reaction toward greater symmetry and simplicity, foreshadowing the style of Louis XVI.

The furniture of the Louis XV period reflected the spirit of the times in form and in decoration. Many kinds of woods were used, including mahogany to some extent, as well as cherry and cheaper woods painted and gilded. Marquetry was not employed extensively, though we sometimes find inlay of tulip, rosewood, maple, and amaranth on some of the larger pieces. The doors and panels of commodes, cabinets, etc., were often veneered, with the grain of the wood running diagonally. All the larger pieces were embellished with metal mounts and carved appliqué, most of it exhibiting superb workmanship.

Indeed, good workmanship was a characteristic of Louis XV furniture. While the chairs of the period were perhaps its most interesting product, there were many other noteworthy pieces in the typical style—tables and elaborately carved consoles, and wonderfully decorated cabinets and commodes. The boudoir was highly developed as a

sort of informal reception-room, and much care and skill were exercised in the development of its decoration and furnishing.

There were screens with carved and gilded frames, surrounding specially woven floral and pictorial tapestries; also screens painted by Watteau and Boucher. Clocks, candelabra, mirrors, etc., were all designed in the extravagant style of the times. Mirrors were introduced over mantels, in place of the heavy carvings of the previous reign.

Panels were much in evidence on walls and ceilings, sometimes painted, sometimes framed tapestries from the Gobelin or Beauvais factories, lovely in design and coloring, depicting pastoral scenes and love-making, contemporary life and Arcadian affectations. Over-elaborate draperies were a feature of the interiors.

The Louis XV chair suggests comfort, ease, and luxury. Curved shapes were in vogue, hardly an angle appearing in the chair-frames. Sometimes these shapes bordered on the fantastic, but they were always luxurious and the workmanship was excellent. The back was shaped to fit the body and was usually softly upholstered, though cane was sometimes used for seats and backs. Indeed, the woodwork of the back was merely a decorative frame for

an upholstered cushion. At the top was often a central shell or flower from which floral carving fell gracefully over the rounded corners of the back. Legs and arm supports of Louis XV chairs were gracefully curved, the legs being slender, with no underbracing, and usually decorated with carving at the knee and foot.

Upholstery was one of the prominent features of these chairs. The large patterns in fabrics that had been popular in Louis XIV's day were replaced by smaller ones. Lyons velvets and silks in floral patterns were much used. Stripes were introduced, but were used less than during the succeeding period. Beauvais tapestries, beautiful in pattern and color, were designed and woven to fit the chairs, in which they were framed by the woodwork, like pictures.

Such are the outstanding features of the furniture styles of the Louis XV period. A prolific and noteworthy period it was, but somewhat too florid, and from an artistic point of view it was surpassed by that which followed.

CHAPTER VI

LOUIS XVI
(1774–1793)

BETWEEN two decorative periods there is always a period of transition. Signs of change are to be noticed in the styles of the late Louis XV period. Nevertheless, the transition at this time, though leading to a style radically different, was comparatively brief, and we find the elements of the new style in full swing early in the reign of Louis XVI. It was, indeed, a more or less arbitrary change, carried out by some of the same artists who had worked under Louis XV. Though some of the features of the Louis XVI style doubtless owe much to the dainty taste of Marie Antoinette, perhaps she has received more credit than was her due, for when she came from Vienna as the bride of the young dauphin, she found the new style already under way.

As a matter of fact, the marked changes in the French decorative styles which developed during the brief reign of Louis XVI were due to a more or less

A Louis XV armchair with cane seat and back

Louis XV armchair of walnut, upholstered with tapestry

A Louis XVI armchair with square back and seat of cane and frame of carved walnut

A Louis XVI armchair with oval back, of painted and gilded wood, upholstered

logical swing of the pendulum to a taste for simpler forms after an over-abundance of the elaborate. Moreover, the artists of the period had become studiously interested in the antiquities recently unearthed at Herculaneum and Pompeii and also in the work of the Italian Renaissance. A classical revival resulted, corresponding to that represented by the work of Adam, Wedgwood, Hepplewhite, and Sheraton in England. The return to simpler forms, more graceful lines, and greater restraint in ornamentation appealed to the volatile French taste. The ponderously or elaborately dignified gave place to a playful and dainty character which we have come to associate with the name of Marie Antoinette.

There are critics who profess to see in the Louis XVI style, as in that of Robert Adam, only a feeble reflection of the classic, lacking comfort, elegance, and stability. Such critics are persons—and there are always some—who are constitutionally incapable of appreciating the unadorned beauty of simplicity and perfect proportion. My own faculty of appreciation reacts more promptly to this more chaste form of art than to the more ornate expressions of Chippendale and the artists of the Louis XV period. Despite severity of line, Louis XVI furniture combines beauty and comfort with exquisite proportions.

Though shorn of ornateness, it does not lack elegance. Though quiet, it is never vulgar. It suggests, indeed, aristocracy. It is a refined style, removed as far as possible from the monstrous, ugly, and grotesque, and characterized by delicacy of outline and fineness of detail. There is a certain purity about the style and a quality which indicates that its simplicity was not the result of poverty of imagination, but of self-imposed restraint. Finally, the style was executed with the best of workmanship and painstaking finish.

As to details of the Louis XVI style, it may be said to be rectangular in principle. Straight lines and the simplest curves replaced the reversed curves and flowing scrolls and give the keynote to the style. Ornamental details, which were used with restraint, were largely classic in type and derivation and were used with great skill. They were often copies of Pompeian and Italian Renaissance carvings. Rococo ornament was abandoned, the horizontal Greek band taking the place of the shell in mouldings. The overdone acanthus and the endive made way for the laurel and the oak-leaf, the latter appearing especially on large pieces of furniture, such as cabinets, bureaus, and consoles, and also on clocks, mir-

ros, and sconces, though less commonly on chairs and tables.

The fluted column became an important feature of construction and ornament, both in woodwork and metal-work. On cabinets and such pieces this column appears in the form of a fluted pilaster, sometimes tapering to the floor, sometimes resting on claw-feet. Frequently the flutings were filled at intervals with quills or husks, often gilded. On chairs and tables the column takes the form of straight, round, vertical legs, fluted and slightly tapering.

Flat surfaces of walls and furniture, always decorated during the previous period, were now often left in the form of plain, rectangular panels, surrounded by mouldings, in place of irregular panels encrusted with ornament. The corners of the rectangles were usually broken, and often there was a medallion or painting inside, somewhat in the Pompeian manner. In place of arms, armor, weapons, and the victor's palm of Louis XIV, or the Watteau and Boucher pastorals of Louis XV, these medallions were classic in subject, or musical instruments, Cupid's quiver, baskets and garlands of flowers, wreaths and bay-leaves.

Many artists and cabinet-makers contributed to the development of this style, including men of great talent and ability. Probably the greatest cabinet-maker of the period was Riesener, who had gained fame and experience during the previous reign. He was a master of marquetry, using woods like pigments. A younger man, equally noteworthy, was David Röntgen, more often referred to as "David," who was patronized by Marie Antoinette, and who is not to be confused with Jacques Louis David, the painter. He also was a producer of wonderfully minute marquetry. The greatest metal-worker of the period was Gouthière, who often coöperated with Riesener. And there were other artists, craftsmen, and decorators whose work should be discussed if space permitted.

Many woods were employed by the cabinet-makers of this period, chiefly oak, walnut, and mahogany. Mahogany became more popular than walnut, but the latter was much used for the frames of upholstered furniture, either natural or enameled in soft colors. Ormolu mounts continued in use on the larger furniture, and also inlay of tulip, rose, pear, amboyna, holly, mahogany, ebony, etc. Lacquered furniture was also in demand to some extent. Light tints prevailed in woodwork and upholstery,

the wood often being stained or finished with white enamel and gilding.

The metal-work of the period was, as a rule, superbly executed, some of it appearing like jewelry. Chinese porcelains were much used, mounted in bronze, and Sèvres plaques were inserted in furniture.

Interior decoration and woodwork partook of the same general character as the furniture. Door- and window-frames became more strictly rectangular, with the carved ornament much smaller and finer. Walls were frequently divided by fluted pilasters into panels which were decorated after the Pompeian or Italian Renaissance manner.

Furniture, when not gilded or enameled, was highly polished, much more of the wood showing than on Louis XV furniture. Bronze mounts were still used, particularly on the dark wood pieces, but Boulle's inlay of tortoise-shell had gone out of fashion. Large pieces, such as vitrines, cabinets, commodes, desks, etc., were commonly made of this dark, polished wood, with metal mounts and occasionally inlay. Sometimes they were furnished with marble tops. Tables were often made in this style, too, of dark polished wood, frequently mahogany, with metal mounts or inlay, and with marble tops, but

they are not so pleasing as the lighter stands and tables in white or tinted enamel or gilt. The marble tops sometimes look a bit too heavy for the slender legs.

The legs of chairs, sofas, tables, commodes, desks, etc., command particular attention because they were distinctive and differed radically from those of the previous reign. These pieces of furniture stood squarely and honestly straight, but not ungracefully so. The curved and cabriole leg was gone, and in its place appeared a straight, comparatively slender, somewhat tapering shaft with no underframing. The typical Louis XVI leg has never seemed as graceful to me as the more slender, reeded leg designed by Sheraton, but, as I say, it was distinctive. It was classic in detail and generally fluted, the fluting being varied with lines of threaded beads, husks, shorter reedings or flutings, or with linings of brass and metal beadings. The feet were often shod with bronze ferrules or finely finished with a ring, an acanthus cup, or a vase-like terminal adapted from the Pompeian. The top of the leg was often carved in a tiny wreath, a row of beading, or a torch-like ornament, or it was topped with a bronze cap. Table-legs often had female heads in ormolu at the top.

As is often the case, the chairs were among the most interesting products of the period. Walnut was the wood most commonly used for chairs, either finished natural or enameled and gilded. Oak and other woods, frequently painted in soft colors or white, were also used for chairs.

Sinuous curves disappeared from the chair-backs, which were usually rectangular, round, or oval in shape. They still produced the effect of exquisitely carved frames for upholstery. Often a bow of ribbon was carved at the top. Square or round seats predominated. The arms were rather high at the juncture with the back and were straight or gently curving, resting on straight or slightly curved supports, which, in turn, rested squarely on the front legs.

The new type of leg has already been mentioned —a straight, slender, vertical shaft, usually round, fluted, and more or less tapering. This was used with both the round-back and the square-back chairs. The effect was saved from stiffness by the proportions and the decoration. A great variety appears in the fluting, and the foot was always given a neat finish. There was seldom any underbracing.

The use of cane increased for the backs and seats

of chairs, and is frequently to be found with painted, gilded, and natural walnut frames. Dining-room chairs of the period very often had cane seats and backs, or were covered with material to match the walls and hangings.

The majority of the chairs, however, were upholstered in fine materials, including brocades and Gobelin, Beauvais, and Aubusson tapestries. Delicate colors prevailed in the upholstery goods, suited to the gilt and white or light-tinted enamels used on the wood. The stuffs were rich, but the designs were smaller than those of the Louis XV upholstery, to match the finer detail of the woodwork. The popular patterns included stripes of fine lines and small florals, as well as larger flowers and foliage, baskets, ribbons, etc. The effect was nearly always light and dainty. Loose cushions of eiderdown were much used with chairs and sofas.

Sofas were upholstered in the same materials, were usually gilded or enameled, and followed, in general, the lines of the chairs. The Louis XVI sofa was longer than that of the previous period and had more legs.

Briefly, these details represent the style developed during the score of years of Louis XVI's reign. In

Louis XVI parlor in the Hotel Manhattan, New York. A good example of the modern application of the style

Typical Empire console table of mahogany with ormolu decorations and a mirror at the back

Three-legged round table with mosaic top, gryphon supports, and the flaming torch in the center

some respects this period marks the climax of French decorative art. Then came the Revolution, the ruin of the state ateliers, and the abrupt termination of the Louis XVI period.

CHAPTER VII

THE EMPIRE

(1799–1814)

THE period of the French Empire was the last of the great historic decorative periods. The styles of the period were, unlike most others, not the result of a gradual development, but of a rather abrupt change.

After Louis XVI came the Revolution, and for a time the arts in France languished. Indeed, the Revolution may be said to have destroyed art. The aristocracy, the patrons of art, were ruined, and there was a general dislocation of the art industries.

The Revolution began in 1792, the Directory was established in 1794, the Consulate under Napoleon in 1799, and the Empire in 1802. The decorative period of the Empire is usually given as extending from 1799 to 1814.

For the first few years chaos reigned in the French art world. During the Directory there was an attempt at reconstruction. An art commission was

appointed, of which Riesener and David Röntgen were members. A treatment of the classic came into vogue, sometimes rather dainty, based on the Roman and Pompeian; but it was an artificial style, not that of a period of natural transition. As a rule, bad taste reigned and art tradition was largely annihilated.

Then came Napoleon to dominate the art world as he dominated everything else in France. He proceeded to refit the royal palaces in accordance with his own ideas, and the people followed his lead in decorative matters. The style of the Directory was an attempted return to the antique, but Napoleon diverted the trend of taste into somewhat different channels, though he also found his inspiration in Rome.

Under Napoleon the French artists and designers were given a new chance, so long as they conformed to the emperor's ideas and sought to interpret his desires. The result was a period of noteworthy if somewhat restricted production. David and Riesener, who had worked under Louis XVI, were the leaders at first. They were followed by the architect-decorators Charles Percier and Pierre Fontaine and others. A book of designs published by Percier and Fontaine in 1812 offers a good record of the

Empire style. Their work at least combined modern comfort and Greek beauty.

The furniture of the period expressed not a court, not an epoch of French life; it expressed the overwhelming personality of Napoleon Bonaparte. It was a period of heroics, of ceremony, of novelty. Napoleon aped the grandeur of the Cæsars, and the design details of the period were suggested by the idea of imperialism and conquest.

The decorative styles, which were based largely on the imperial Roman, became cold, formal, heavy, with little of the light or fanciful about them. They were not lavishly magnificent, like the styles of Louis XIV, yet, though somewhat stiff and constrained, they were not without a certain dignity and grandeur and were never effetely luxurious.

Empire furniture was characterized by good cabinet work, finely executed metal mounts, beautiful mahogany, and rich upholstery. Construction was for the most part simple, but it was a heavy, formal simplicity, not the graceful simplicity of Louis XVI.

Mahogany was the wood most used by the cabinetmakers, both solid and veneered, enriched with appliqué. Marquetry was discarded and there was only a moderate amount of carved wood, but much plain surface embellished with finely modeled brass,

bronze, gilt, and ormolu mounts. The framework of Empire chairs was generally mahogany, or painted, enameled, bronzed, and gilded woods. For the most part, the mahogany was finished natural, with but little gilding. The popular upholstery stuffs included loud brocades and silks or velvets in plain, strong colors, frequently rich green or ruby red, figured or sprinkled with formal, classic motifs. Tapestries, so popular during the preceding periods, were little used.

The decorative details of the Empire style were significant and symbolic, reflecting the glory of the emperor. There was nothing approaching rococo, and the dainty forms of the Louis XVI period were wholly abandoned. The classic anthemion came back in Roman form, together with the wreath of bay, the torch, the Roman eagle, the Roman fasces, the Phrygian cap of liberty, the Athenian bee, the laurel branch, the Greek fret and honeysuckle, the winged Victory, other winged figures, including cherubs, the helmeted heads of warriors, trophies and weapons, the letter N in a victor's wreath, and, after the Egyptian campaign, the sphinx. These details are to be found especially in the metal mounts, which well repay special study. Among the constructive features of Empire furniture are to be

found the fluted column upholding a torch, the plain, round, supporting column, and various forms of the lion's foot.

The chairs of the period ranged from fairly simple side-chairs to elaborate throne-like affairs. In general, they may be divided into two types. The larger chairs were massive, pretentious, and lavishly enriched with metal mounts and structural carving. Sometimes a sweeping horn of plenty curves down into the arm, or the arms are terminated with the heads of rams, lions, etc. Sometimes strange gryphons form the front supports, the heads supporting the arms of the chair and the bodies drawn out into the single shaft of the leg, with a lion's foot resting on the floor. Flaming torches and gryphons appear where there is no logical need for them.

There were also armchairs fashioned on the model of the ancient curule seat, heavier than those of the Italian Renaissance, often with swans' necks for arms, supported by cupids. The typical Empire armchair, with its wide, concave back, was at least comfortable.

Often these forms verged upon the grotesque, but there was, happily, a simpler type of Empire chair that was full of dignity and not without grace. These chairs, severely simple in form, had square

frames and straight, round legs, the back legs often curving slightly outward. They were made of plain mahogany or of some other wood enameled white. Little carving was used on them, but they were usually ornamented with well-modeled ormolu mounts and were elegantly upholstered.

Among the tables, the medium-sized round ones were commonest, though there were also square ones, while the consoles and pier-tables were usually stiffly rectangular. A common form of table had short claw feet upon which rested a low shelf; this supported straight, round, vertical pillars which, in turn, supported the top. Sometimes such tables were supported by carved gryphons resting on a shaped base, while some of the heavier ones were supported by sphinxes. Often the round tables had a central column, with a broad base resting on three lion's feet, a form which served as a model for many of our American "Colonial" tables; or a three-cornered plinth on three carved feet supported three round columns.

Most of the tables were of mahogany, either solid or veneered, though there were also enameled tables. The table-tops were often of marble, usually white or nearly black. Metal mounts were much in evidence, and metal feet and pillar-caps. A common

feature of secretaries and tables was a round column of mahogany, with an ornamental cap of bronze in the form of a sphinx's head, and a bronze foot at the base. Often the caps were modeled in the anthemion form.

Often the supports of consoles, cabinets, bookcases, etc., showed little style in the rear, being sometimes merely flat boards, but the front legs were usually more elegant, often tapering, crowned with the female bust, and with feet of ormolu. Mirrors were often set into the under parts of consoles, beneath the top and against the walls. Gryphons and sphinxes sometimes took the place of the round columns as the front supports of console tables.

In the form of the bed a great change took place. The overdraped forms of the preceding periods gave place to plain but stately couches or to heavy, box-like affairs, with head- and foot-boards of the same height, either straight or rolling, and with no posts or canopy.

Interior decoration followed the same general scheme as furniture design. The walls were largely plain, strongly colored panels, rather Pompeian in type, sometimes relieved by the gold N in a wreath or one of the other Napoleonic symbols. Hangings were often rich velvets. Candelabra and sconces

A typical drop-front desk of the Empire period, showing the round pillars, vertical form, and ormolu mounts

A *fauteuil gondole*. Note the concave back, curved rear legs, and swan-neck arms

Another, built of mahogany, with brocade upholstery and with metal mounts

A typical bed of the Empire period, built of mahogany enriched with ormolu mounts

were frequently winged figures, stiff in modeling but good in material and finish.

Such are the salient features of the style which was predominant in France during the first decade of the last century. Americans were pro-French in those days, and after the Sheraton influence had passed we began borrowing more freely from France than from England. The styles of the French Empire, therefore, have a peculiar interest for us because, though we wrought many changes in the process of adaptation, they formed the basis of American decorative styles during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Mahogany was plentiful here, the cabinet-making trade was flourishing, and we turned out a large quantity of so-called American-Empire furniture, constructed largely with posts and columns, often carved in coarse pineapple and acanthus-leaf designs, but in general following the Empire spirit. And not all of it was bad.

A few years ago one occasionally heard of a drawing-room, music-room, dining-room, hall, or other formal apartment, being furnished and decorated in the Empire style, and when it was well done the result was not without beauty and distinction. Americans, however, have apparently found the style too cold for their liking, especially for use in the home,

and it seems to have fallen into general disfavor. Manufacturers inform me that they are making practically no reproductions or adaptations of Empire furniture; there is no call for them. It seemed to me, however, that this style should receive as much attention as the styles of more popular periods, in order to round out logically the subject of the French decorative styles.

CHAPTER VIII

JACOBEAN AND RESTORATION

(1603–1689)

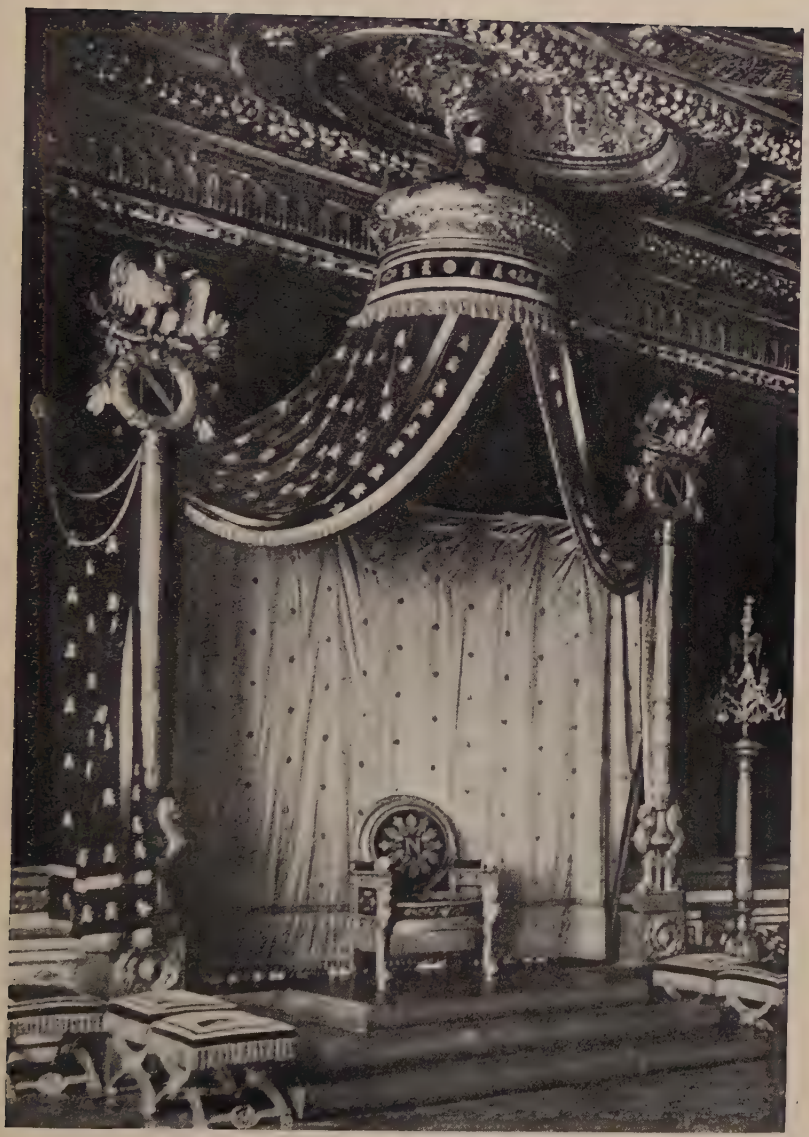
TURNING now from France to England, and going back two centuries, I will attempt a consideration of the more important English styles. Although some effort has recently been made to revive the styles of the Tudor or Elizabethan period, Jacobean furniture is the earliest that has succeeded in awakening modern interest to any appreciable extent. Then, for the first time, furniture was made that is really well suited to modern needs, and modern reproductions of Jacobean furniture are beginning to find a ready market.

I shall try to cover the entire subject of English furniture design from 1600 to 1800 in three short chapters, which, of course, means little more than a working outline. I shall divide the subject into the periods of the Jacobean and the Restoration, the Anglo-Dutch period of William and Mary and Queen Anne, and the Georgian period.

The term Jacobean, or Stuart, is often given to the entire period from 1603 to 1689, but a distinct change in styles took place in the middle of it, and it is much more logical to divide it into two periods. The Jacobean period proper included the reigns of James I (1603–1625) and Charles I (1625–1649). There intervened the Commonwealth, or so-called Cromwellian period (1653–1659), followed by the period of the Restoration, including the reigns of Charles II (1660–1685) and James II (1685–1689). After that came William and Mary and the period to be discussed in the next chapter.

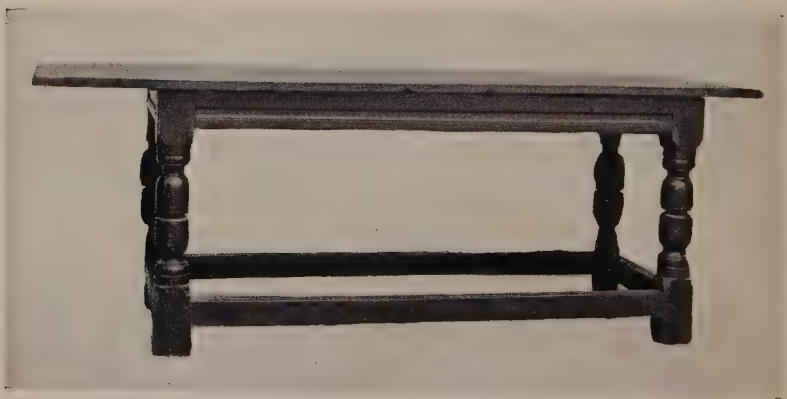
Up to the close of the Cromwellian period oak was the predominant wood in English furniture. About 1660 began the age of walnut. The furniture of the reign of James I was that a transition stage. Elizabethan features, briefly described in Chapter III, generally predominated. The true Jacobean style reached the height of its development during the reign of Charles I. During the period under discussion we find the native sturdiness of the Jacobean oak followed by the more ornate and graceful forms of the Restoration.

During the Jacobean period proper the general form of the furniture remained severely rectangular. The legs of tables and chairs were perpendicular, the



The Empire style. Napoleon's throne room at Fontainebleau

Typical Jacobean press cupboard of oak. 1650–1675



Dining table of the plainer Jacobean type. 1650–1675

chair-backs straight, and the seats flat. Such articles as stood on legs were heavily underbraced.

It was in decorative carving that Jacobean furniture excelled. The typical designs include, first of all, the running pattern of figure eights and contiguous circles. Other hall-marks of the period are the semicircle filled with petals, geometric and lozenge paneling, the rounded arch, and more or less elaborate double scrolls. More and more intricate strapwork was introduced, and a spiral form is frequently to be found in chair-legs and on cupboards and chests of drawers.

Chairs were still uncommon, but appeared in greater variety. The wainscot-chair persisted, but became gradually lighter in form, with the back sometimes pierced. There were also various forms of turned chairs, with three or four legs. During the reign of Charles I a French chair was introduced, a much lighter form, with turned legs and with the back and seat covered with leather or embroidery. The use of stools and forms continued. Toward the close of the period couches and day-beds were introduced.

The typical table of the period was of oak, similar to the Elizabethan, with bulb-turned legs giving place later to simpler baluster forms, and often with

rails carved in arabesque or lunette patterns. Occasionally smaller tables were made with a single leaf and a swinging leg to support it—the forerunner of the gate-leg table.

Chests and cupboards, often richly carved, were common. The cupboard, indeed, was one of the most interesting products of the period. One form, called the press-cupboard, was closed in front; another, the court-cupboard, was open below, being merely an elevated chest resting on spiral, turned, or carved supports.

These were the outstanding features of the furniture of the Jacobean period. The so-called Cromwellian period was characterized merely by an added stiffness and severity among the Puritans, and by very little of artistic significance. The Cromwellian chair was a descendant of the wainscot, with a half back of padded leather in place on the solid panel, and usually a seat of the same material fastened with brass-headed nails. Legs, stiles, and stretchers were of turned oak. Toward the end of the Commonwealth walnut began to come into vogue, and a tendency toward greater lightness. Spiral or simply turned legs and the use of cane seats and backs began to appear in chairs. Chests became less popular,

giving place to cupboards with drawers, or chests of drawers.

With the restoration of Charles II to the throne of England in 1660 there came greater luxury and comfort into the better English homes. The king brought with him from the Continent the spirit of the late Flemish Renaissance and the French styles of Louis XIV. Imported Dutch and Flemish workmen introduced a more elaborate scroll-work, pierced carving, and inlay of ebony, ivory, and mother-of-pearl. The tulip and other design motifs appeared in the carving.

Oaken furniture of a late Jacobean type continued to be made to some extent, but gradually the lighter forms and the use of walnut superseded it. The architectural note in furniture almost entirely disappeared. It was a somewhat mixed, exotic style, that of the Restoration period, but one not lacking in beauty and distinction. Marquetry became more and more popular, and the use of expensive tapestries and embroideries for upholstered chairs.

Perhaps the most noteworthy products of this period were the Charles II chair and the gate-leg table. These chairs were made in oak and maple sometimes, but usually in walnut or beech. The

backs were tall and narrow, with carved cresting, sides, and underbraces. They were often surmounted by a Tudor rose or a crown. Slender, twisted columns and rich scrolls carved in high relief became a feature. Cane and upholstery were used for backs and seats, the backs frequently consisting of narrow cane panels within an elaborately carved frame.

These chairs were of two general types—Flemish and Spanish. In the Flemish type the back consited of turned stiles, within which was a cane panel bordered by scroll-work carving. The legs were usually S-shaped, with scroll feet and a broad scroll-work underbrace in front. In the Spanish type the legs were turned and the backs were of solid cane, upholstery, or tooled leather. The feet were square, channeled, and flaring—the typical Spanish foot. Toward the end of the period the day-bed or cane sofa became fashionable, with ornamental details closely following those of the chairs.

Long, oak dining-tables, showing more refinement than formerly in the turning of legs and struts, and with carved aprons, belong to this period, but these gave place to tables with two swinging leaves. The most noteworthy table of this type, and one of the most interesting introductions of the period, was the

Small table, late Jacobean, of oak and walnut, showing the popular spiral turning

An oak gate-leg table of about 1685, with carved legs and supports. Turned legs were more common

Oak wainscot chair of about 1650, showing the Jacobean variation of the Tudor rose in the carving

A typical Restoration chair with scroll-work carving, cane seat and back, and the Flemish feet

Roundabout chair of the late seventeenth century, with rush bottom and with the Spanish foot in front

gate-leg table, made usually in oak or walnut. It was usually round, though sometimes oval or rectangular, with occasionally a border carved around the top in low relief. It had turned underbraces and supports, and six or more turned legs, two or four of which could be opened like gates to support the drop leaves.

Another noteworthy product is found in the beautiful cupboards, cabinets, chests of drawers, and clock cases of the period, usually of walnut and inlaid in elaborate and intricate patterns. The beds, however, were still heavy four-posters, with clumsy testers and stuffy hangings.

Walnut was found to be a much better medium than oak for work of this kind, and by the time of James II's reign it had practically driven out the coarser-grained wood as the fashionable material.

The period of the Restoration, therefore, was marked by a distinct change in furniture styles, with greater luxury, grace, and ornateness. When William of Orange ascended the throne of England in 1689, the styles underwent further changes, and a new period of so-called Anglo-Dutch furniture was inaugurated.

CHAPTER IX

ANGLO-DUTCH
(1689–1720)

FOLLOWING the abdication of James II of England, furniture styles underwent a marked change. A strong foreign influence was felt, partly French, partly Dutch, causing alterations in taste which marked the next two reigns, with a gradual but steady tendency to assimilate and nationalize these foreign elements.

The so-called Anglo-Dutch period includes the reigns of William and Mary (1689–1702) and Queen Anne (1702–1714), and part of the reign of George I (1714–1727).

It has always seemed to me that the furniture of the reign of William and Mary has received less attention than it deserved. I have found it commonly confused with that of Queen Anne, though in many fundamental respects it is quite different. If not entirely graceful, it is at least interesting, and it is not to be neglected by the student of style development. Indeed, I find that William and Mary re-

productions are now becoming more popular with the American furniture trade than ever before.

When William, the Stadtholder of the United Netherlands, ascended the throne of England as the consort of Queen Mary, he brought with him all his love for the styles and workmanship of the Low Countries. At first the vogue was largely for Flemish features, but the purely Dutch soon gained the ascendency. Ideas and workmen were imported from Holland, the commercial relations between the two countries being very close at the time.

The period was one in which foreign influences were paramount—not merely Dutch, but French also. Following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, many Huguenot refugees found their way into England, and among them were designers and artisans who brought with them the styles of Louis XIV, for which the way had already been prepared during the reigns of Charles II and James II. The chief of these was Daniel Marot, who left France in 1686, went to live in Holland, was summoned to England by William in 1690, and became the royal architect. He clung to the styles of Louis XIV, and his influence on English decorative art was very powerful for the next ten or fifteen years. We find, therefore, a decided French ele-

ment in the styles of the first half of the so-called Anglo-Dutch period.

In general, it may be said that the furniture produced during the reign of William and Mary was better suited to domestic uses than any that had preceded it. It was lighter, more comfortable, and characterized by greater simplicity. Curves appeared more abundantly, though not so universally as during the following reign. Marquetry continued to be used on all flat surfaces in place of carved panels, that being a favorite art among the Dutch. Carving, indeed, almost disappeared on the purely Dutch pieces, though panels made of mouldings were used, and carving was employed on the furniture of the French type. Toward the end of the century japanning became popular, and walnut veneering was not uncommon.

Chinese objects were imported, as a result of the growing East India trade, and collecting became a fad. This influence was reflected in the japanning and the fret designs which were sometimes used, though the Chinese craze did not reach its height until about 1740.

The chairs of this period are interesting as representing many variations in the transition from the chairs of the Restoration to those of a truly Dutch

type. The rectangular panel in the chair-backs was dropped; the chair-backs were tilted backward and were often shaped to fit the body, and upholstery became more common.

The typical leg to be found on William and Mary chairs, tables, and chests of drawers, was straight and rather heavily turned, often with an inverted cup-shaped or bell-shaped ornament, and the legs were frequently joined by curved underbraces.

Perhaps the most interesting of the chairs of the period were those that followed the Franco-Dutch designs of Daniel Marot. They had usually four turned legs with curved underbraces, upholstered seats, and solid backs, ornamentally shaped at the top and filled with cane or with carving. In the general character of their design they were strongly Louis XIV. Marot also designed elaborate bedsteads in the French manner, with heavily draped canopies.

Various forms of tables were in use, on which walnut veneering was often used, and inlay in pear, sycamore, maple, cherry, etc. Walnut card-tables were introduced, both solid and veneered, and both large and small tables, with round, oblong, square, or scalloped tops. The larger ones were used for dining, as the gate-leg table went out of fashion.

The William and Mary form of the high chest of drawers, which was the forerunner of the highboy, was raised from the floor on six legs, often turned with the cup-shaped form, with round feet, and with variously shaped underbracing. The upper portion was severely square, and the top cornice straight and flat. Sometimes the drawers were paneled with moulding, and sometimes the flat surfaces were enriched with more or less elaborate marquetry.

Oak, chestnut, beech, and walnut were all used during this period, but chiefly the walnut.

The style of the reign of William and Mary was, indeed, a mixed style, the style of a transition period. But by the end of the century this transition had been passed and purely Dutch styles were in the ascendency. Then, in 1702, began the brief but strongly marked reign of Queen Anne, and the foreign elements were at length assimilated and a genuine English style was developed on the Dutch lines.

The year 1700, indeed, roughly marks the dividing line between what may be called the ancient and the modern types of furniture. Straight lines melted into curves. The turned leg was superseded by the cabriole. Underbracing disappeared. More attention began to be paid to form than to ornament.

During the reign of Queen Anne, carving was employed to some extent, but in simpler forms than during the Restoration period, and it was cut on the surface, instead of forming the outlines. Common ornamental details included the shell, mascaron, cartouche, swags of flowers, acanthus leaves, and some classical designs.

Highboys, cabinets, bureaus, small tables, and large chairs were the more noteworthy productions of the period. Furniture was made in walnut, oak, beech, holly, birch, and yew, but walnut continued to hold the leading place. Veneer continued popular and, to some extent, marquetry. The cabriole leg was used everywhere—on chairs, tables, highboys, lowboys, etc., with the round, Dutch, or splay foot. Occasionally the cabriole was given a shell ornament at the knee, though usually it was undecorated, as walnut was not as well suited to this sort of carving as the later mahogany of Chippendale.

The Windsor chair and the straight slat-back and banister-back chairs were introduced during Queen Anne's reign, but these were the chairs of the cottagers and country people, and do not form part of the style development. The chair which most concerns us was the broad-seated, cabriole-legged fiddle-back. This was the chair of fashion, built usually

of walnut, sometimes plain and sometimes decorated. It was the forerunner of Chippendale's styles. Usually the front legs were cabriole, the back legs being simple curves or straight. Shell ornaments sometimes appeared on the knees, at the center of the front of the seat, and at the middle of the top of the back. The backs were high, curved to fit the back of the sitter, and the outline formed a continuous curve. In the center of the back appeared a solid vase-shaped, fiddle-shaped, or lyre-shaped splat. The seats were broad, flat, and upholstered, and were usually shaped in curves both on front and sides, with rounded corners.

The roundabout, or corner-chair, which had its beginnings in the turned chairs of the sixteenth century, became popular during the early years of the eighteenth century. It was a square chair, standing cornerwise, with semicircular back and arms running around two sides, and the fourth corner and leg in front. The Queen Anne type had cabriole legs, with upright spindles in the back, or three uprights and two splats, as did Chippendale's roundabouts later, only the Queen Anne splats were solid and Chippendale's were pierced. The seats were rush, wooden, or upholstered.

Queen Anne tables include a number of light

English cabinet, embellished with marketry of the Dutch type. Period of William and Mary

Cane-back armchairs of the William and Mary period, showing the French influence of Daniel Marot

High chest of drawers of the William and Mary period with Flemish paneling and bell-turned supports

Late Queen Anne highboy of walnut veneer, with Dutch legs, broken-arch pediment, and brass fittings.

forms of tea-tables and card-tables in walnut, cherry, and other woods, with four cabriole legs. Tea-table with a central support and short, curved, tripod legs were now introduced for the first time, and tripod candle-stands. An early form of writing-table also appeared.

The highboy became increasingly popular, the six turned legs of the William and Mary chest of drawers giving place to four short cabriole legs without underbracing. At first the top was straight, with a cornice, or sometimes with a double arch effect; then the broken-arch pediment made its appearance. Inlay of pear, holly, sycamore, and other woods was often used on the fronts and sides of cabinets and highboys. There was also the lowboy, or dressing table, and a Dutch type of bookcase desk.

It was during the transition period that walnut turned the scepter over to mahogany. New style influences were at work which gradually developed into the fashions of the Georgian period.

CHAPTER X

GEORGIAN
(1720–1810)

IT is no easy matter to condense a characterization of the furniture styles of the Georgian period, for the reason that those styles varied widely with the ascendency of one master cabinet-maker after another. It was, indeed, a period in which the names of the master-designers of furniture eclipsed those of the reigning sovereigns. In general it includes the reigns of George I (1714–1727), which was the early Georgian period; George II (1727–1760), embracing the transition and Chippendale periods; and George III (1760–1820), the classic Georgian and the decadence.

The period was marked by the decline of walnut and the rise of mahogany as the fashionable furniture material. Mahogany was known and used in Queen Anne's day, but it did not reach the height of its popularity until about 1745, in Chippendale's time.

English furniture of the early Georgian and tran-

sition periods shows a tendency to drop the purely Dutch characteristics of Queen Anne. Chair-backs became shorter and more varied in outline, and new types of furniture and new forms of decoration came into vogue. The cabriole leg persisted, to be sure, but the ball-and-claw foot superseded the round Dutch foot.

It was not until Chippendale's time that the Georgian period may be said to have really begun. From that time on the Dutch elements passed away, and English furniture styles passed through periods in which the French rococo of Louis XV, Chinese and Gothic elements, and finally classic and Louis XVI features became successively paramount. Thomas Chippendale began to work obscurely during the latter part of the reign of George I, making walnut furniture in the transition styles, but it was not until 1735 or later that the real Chippendale began to emerge and the Georgian period was firmly established.

Chippendale was a wonderful adapter of styles, obtaining his inspiration from various sources. He was remarkably versatile. His was the ability to combine inconsistent elements in a harmonious whole. His workmanship and skill as a carver were of the highest order. His designs were daring, and varied

from the bizarre to the exquisite. They ranged from the Dutch school of the early Georgian period, through the rococo of Louis XV, the Chinese and Gothic fads, finally leading up to the classic and Louis XVI.

Chippendale was the dominant figure in English furniture design for a quarter of a century, or up to about 1770. The first edition of his book of designs, "The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director," appeared in 1753, and the third edition in 1762. He impressed his personality on the styles of the period more than any other designer of furniture had ever been able to do.

He began first with Queen Anne types, making bandy-legged, fiddle-backed chairs, among other things, very broad in the seat and with ball-and-claw feet. As the style of the transition advanced, Chippendale improved his cabriole leg and abandoned the Queen Anne chair-back for a squarer form with rounded corners, to be followed soon by the bow-shaped or slightly curved top rail with which his name is chiefly associated.

The attempts that are often made to divide Chippendale's work into three distinct periods—Anglo-Dutch, French, and Chinese-Gothic—are somewhat misleading, for though fashions changed, there were

A small stand of the Queen Anne period, with two drop leaves supported on swinging cabriole legs of the Dutch type

Early Georgian chair of walnut veneer, showing the ball-and-claw feet of 1715 and after

for china designed by Chippendale in modified Chinese style

crust top and ball-and-

no such sharp divisions as these. He began to design furniture in the Louis XV manner somewhere about 1745, and he continued to produce French designs till the day of his death. It is true, however, that his best work is found in the fairly unmixed French designs of 1750–60. After that the combination of rococo and Chinese, with a dash of Gothic, proved too much for him.

Chippendale's typical chair-back consisted of a moderately carved frame, rectangular in its general outlines, and a pierced splat, developed from the solid splat of the Queen Anne period. This splat appeared in the earlier chairs of the Dutch type and in those of the Louis XV type, including the famous ribbon-back chairs. He also made a roundabout chair with these splats. Almost as familiar is the ladder-back chair, with its four or five bow-shaped cross-pieces. The Chinese and Gothic designs were made up of various forms of fretwork in the chair-backs. The Chinese element appeared in a more elaborate form in the pagoda and waterfall carving of mirror-frames, bookcase-tops, etc.

Chippendale did not always use the cabriole leg with his French chairs, but sometimes the straight, square legs that also appear on his other types. His seats were usually wide, square cornered, and up-

holstered. Some of his chairs were made with underbraces; some without them.

He also made a wide variety of card-tables, sofas, settees, desks, bureaus, secretaries, bookcases, etc., in French and Chinese-Gothic styles, and he published designs for clock-cases, mirror-frames, and numerous other pieces.

Toward the end of his career his work showed a decided deterioration, having a leaning toward grotesque mixtures of style.

Chippendale was a master-carver, and seldom if ever used inlay for decoration. Mahogany was his favorite wood, but he also employed walnut, maple, cherry, and birch.

Robert and James Adam must be mentioned in any consideration of the Georgian period, for though they were not cabinet-makers, but architects and decorators, they designed furniture and exerted a strong influence on style. To them is due the credit for the classic revival, which had already been inspired in architecture by Sir Christopher Wren, and which in the realm of furniture design was in full swing as early as 1760 and persisted throughout the rest of the century. Both Hepplewhite and Sheraton owed much to the pioneer work of the Adam brothers.

Robert Adam returned from a tour of Italy in 1754, embued with the spirit of Roman and classic Italian art, and adopted a style which had already found expression in the French school of Louis XVI. In 1764 the two brothers published a folio of Roman designs, and in 1788 their "Works in Architecture."

They designed furniture to suit their houses, and these designs marked the emergence from the bad styles of the late Chippendale period and set the current of popular taste running toward a preference for the simplicity and grace of the classic. Rococo, Dutch, and Chinese elements were utterly abandoned. The cabriole leg was superseded by the straight, tapering leg before 1785, and lighter construction became the rule. The Adam style is characterized by simplicity and delicacy, elegant slenderness, and fine proportions. Carving, when used, was in low relief. The later work was rich in inlay of tulip-wood, satinwood, and ebony, and some of it was painted. Carving and inlay were in classic details—the urn, the laurel wreath, the oval sunburst, the acanthus leaf, arabesques, ribbon-bands, festoons, and garlands.

Furniture made from Adam designs is rare. The chairs were small and delicate, the backs low and

narrow and often oval in shape, the legs straight and slender, but never cabriole.

It was not until George Hepplewhite's work became popular, however, somewhere between 1765 and 1775, that the new taste became crystallized, though Hepplewhite was never as thorough a classicist as Adam or Sheraton. Hepplewhite built, as well as designed, a large amount of furniture, though his output was not as great as that of Chippendale. It marked, in a way, the transition from the Chippendale to the classic influence. His book of designs, "The Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Guide," appeared in 1789, two years after his death, and was published by A. Hepplewhite & Co., the business having been carried on by his widow.

Hepplewhite is best known for his shield-back chairs, his square, tapering legs, often ending in the spade foot, and for his splendid sideboards. The sideboard was being gradually developed during Chippendale's later years, and was brought to perfection by Hepplewhite and Shearer. Hepplewhite also made wardrobes that supplanted the old highboy, dressing-tables with heart-shaped mirrors, and cabinets with long, tapering legs. His chairs were mostly made with shield-shaped or oval backs, and were distinguished by their beauty of curve and

Chippendale chair, with pierced splat

Chippendale chair, ladder-back type

Hepplewhite shield-back armchair

Sheraton chair with rectangular back

Hepplewhite mahogany pier table with square legs, inlaid with satinwood on the top and front

A typical Sheraton table with inlay on the front and with tapering, reeded legs

proportion. The seats were usually upholstered.

Hepplewhite preferred mahogany for most of his work, using satinwood and rosewood moderately to meet special demands.

Hepplewhite was not a great carver like Chippendale, nor so finished an artist in inlay as was Sheraton, but he employed both carving and inlay with restraint and success. His sideboards, especially, were often embellished with fine, delicate inlay of satinwood, tulip-wood, sycamore, rosewood, maple, yew, holly, and ebony, with little or no carving. He was fond of delicate vertical patterns on the legs of tables and sideboards; straight parallel lines, the husk or wheat-ear, the meander pattern, and the Greek fret were favorite motifs. His carving was well executed and in low relief, and included the wheat-ear, the draped urn, and, on his oval chair-backs, the three feathers of the Prince of Wales.

Thomas Shearer's name has usually been overshadowed by that of his contemporary, Hepplewhite, though Shearer was Hepplewhite's equal, if not his superior, in the matter of sideboards. To him should be given the credit for originating the serpentine front. He probably made few chairs, but specialized in sideboards and bookcases, and desks with secret drawers, like Sheraton's. His

"Designs of Household Furniture," published in 1791, shows a style similar to that of Hepplewhite, but a trifle heavier.

During the Georgian period there were a number of pieces of furniture made by other cabinet-makers that are worthy of attention, notably desks and secretaries and clockcases. Tall clocks were made with both square and broken-arch tops, and often veneered or inlaid. Secretaries and escritoires developed in similar fashion, first having ball feet, then short cabriole legs with ball-and-claw feet, then ogee or bracket feet, and finally short, turned legs of the Adam and Sheraton school. Four-poster beds became lighter and more graceful, those of Hepplewhite being particularly graceful.

Thomas Sheraton, the last of the great Georgians, and in many respects the most artistic, published his "Drawing-Book" in 1793 and produced his designs well into the nineteenth century. His later work was degenerate, but in his best period it was unsurpassed for delicacy, grace of proportion, and restraint. Though less versatile than either Chippendale or Hepplewhite, he was artistically more correct. His style, leaning toward the Louis XVI, shows strongly the Adam influence.

Sheraton loved straight lines and rectangular

treatments, and handled them masterfully. His furniture is fragile-looking, but is well made. A distinguishing feature is the tapering leg, usually round, often reeded, and exquisitely shaped.

Sheraton was not only an artist in design, but a master in the use of woods. He employed satinwood almost as much as mahogany, and also other exotic and native woods. Not a little of his furniture was beautifully decorated with gilding and painting.

Carving was always a secondary matter with Sheraton; form and color were what he sought. He was a master at inlay. Some of his finest work shows classic ornaments and borders in marquetry of sycamore, kingwood, satinwood, and green-stained whitewood set into both light and dark mahogany. His carving was always in low relief, and included such classic motifs as the urn, vase, lyre, cornucopia, wreath, and musical instruments.

Sheraton used an oval chair-back borrowed from Adam, but his typical chair-back was rectangular, with the top line broken. Within the frame were various forms of straight-line work, or such carving as the vase or urn. He seldom used the shield-shaped back of Hepplewhite and never the pierced splat of Chippendale.

Sheraton designed a wide variety of furniture, in-

cluding tables, sideboards, bureaus, ingeniously arranged desks and writing-tables, sofas, slender four-poster bedsteads, exquisite bijou pieces, etc.

With Sheraton the development of English style in furniture properly ends, for after him came confusion, followed by the heavy, graceless forms of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER XI

AMERICAN STYLES

(1600–1840)

ALTHOUGH there are some interesting things to be recorded in reference to American-made furniture, so far as the student of styles is concerned, the whole may be covered in a single chapter. Not that American furniture was unworthy, but the styles followed those of the mother-country so closely that there is no separate process of development to be noted. With a few noteworthy exceptions—the Windsor chair, the furniture of Duncan Phyfe, and the styles of the so-called American Empire period—an understanding of the English styles, as already outlined, would furnish a working knowledge of American furniture styles.

Before proceeding, it may be well to come to an understanding on the definition of a much-abused word—Colonial. As often as not, any furniture of the Georgian period, English or American, is called Colonial, which is, of course, a misuse of the word.

More often the name is given to all old American furniture up to 1840. One finds it particularly applied to nineteenth century or American Empire furniture, to describe something that is not Chippendale, Hepplewhite, or Sheraton. All of which is careless, erroneous, and misleading. Obviously, the only proper use for the word Colonial is to distinguish the products of the colonies before they became states. For post-Revolutionary furniture and other objects we must find a more accurate nomenclature.

Beginning, then, with the furniture of the colonies, we find that the homes of the seventeenth century were furnished partly with things brought over from the old country and partly with things made here after imported patterns. Not a little variety is to be discovered when the various colonies are considered. The English, the Dutch, and the Huguenots all contributed their national elements. In New England there was chiefly English and home-made furniture, the plainer forms predominating. In the South the furniture was nearly all imported, and more carved oak and upholstery was to be found. In New York the pure Dutch prevailed, including such prominent pieces as the *kas*, a large wardrobe or cupboard which was usually gaily painted or inlaid.

AMERICAN STYLES

The furniture of New England is typical of most of that which was brought to this country or made here. During the seventeenth century there were many American cabinet-makers at work, of greater or less skill. They produced the current English styles, as well as local variations, employing not only oak and walnut, but such native woods as came easily to hand—hickory, ash, elm, maple, pine, cedar, cherry, birch, etc.

During the first half of the eighteenth century we find the English styles of the Anglo-Dutch period, though always lagging a few years behind the contemporary English fashions. The Queen Anne fiddle-back chair, for example, became popular here about 1730. Much cottage furniture was used during this period—rush-bottomed roundabout, slat-back and banister-back chairs, etc.—as well as comfortable, upholstered easy chairs with wings.

Mahogany became common about 1740, and between 1750 and 1775 American furniture-makers produced work that compared favorably with that of England. Early Georgian styles were followed, shortly before the Revolution, by the Chippendale vogue. The Hepplewhite wave reached us so soon after the war that it never gained the foothold that the Sheraton style did. Still, we find a

good many Chippendale, Hepplewhite, and Sheraton pieces, particularly chairs, some of them made directly from English designs, others displaying more or less striking modifications.

Before taking up American furniture of the nineteenth century, there is one interesting and rather important American contribution to be considered —the Windsor chair. There was an English Windsor chair, and ours was based upon it, but the American chair-makers carried its development much farther and produced something much more varied and graceful. The Windsor chair flourished from 1740 to 1820 and appeared in many forms—side-chairs and armchairs, loop-backs, hoop-backs, fan-backs, comb-backs, and low-backs. These variations offer an interesting opportunity for special study which it will be necessary for us to forego. All forms were made of hickory, ash, etc., and were painted. The back was a graceful outline filled with parallel spindles. The legs were turned and raked; the wooden seats were pleasingly shaped.

Between 1790 and 1810 the Sheraton influence predominated, and it was a refining influence. Furniture was made here after the Sheraton patterns, and there was also a not unsuccessful attempt to originate designs here, based on Sheraton lines and

principles. There were Sheraton chairs and near-Sheraton chairs, Sheraton and Hepplewhite bedsteads, excellent Sheraton sofas and Sheraton sideboards, both pure and modified, which marked these two decades as among the most refined in the decorative history of America.

A number of purely American variations of this period are worth a glance. There was the so-called fancy chair, for example, which was popular about 1800–1830. It was made of light, soft wood, painted and decorated with gilt, with rush or cane seat, straight turned legs, and a fairly low back which usually had horizontal slats or rungs. It was made with and without arms.

The Empire influence followed that of Sheraton. It had already invaded England, affecting the work of Sheraton himself. Some of the English adaptations of the Empire possessed merit, but most of them did not. They showed a tendency to go to grotesque extremes of style. The English designers seem to have lost their ability to absorb foreign elements. The metal-work was poor and the carving coarse. Taste was at a low ebb, and the English public accepted fantastic novelty as a substitute for originality, and the lavish massing of material in place of good lines and finely wrought details.

But America had broken away from England and did not at once follow her into the artistic quagmire. We, too, fell under the spell of the Empire, but we did not take it over, lock, stock, and barrel. Actually, the Empire influence was merely an active ingredient of a truly American style, which existed nowhere else and which was not without distinction, character, and artistic merit.

This is the style sometimes referred to as late Colonial, or American Empire. Neither term is accurately descriptive. Some one has suggested Jeffersonian, and I am not sure that it might not suffice. Jefferson was an amateur architect and something of a leader in artistic thought, a devotee of the classic and a friend of France. How much he had to do with the furniture styles I do not know, but it was probably as much as Queen Anne had to do with those which bear her name. It was, quite markedly, a Jeffersonian period.

The furniture of this time showed Empire influence strongly, but it differed materially from the French Empire furniture or the English imitation of it. There is actually little in common, for example, between a French Empire chair and an American Jeffersonian chair.

Roughly speaking, the furniture of 1810 to 1820

was more elegant than that of the next decade. It was a prolific period, and mahogany was plentiful. The demand was for an abundance of carving. Carved columns, claw-feet, pineapple finials, and ornamental brasses were features. They were all a bit coarse, but at least our forefathers had the good sense not to import the exotic Egyptian extravagances which debased the styles of France and England. Massive furniture was the rule, with posts and supports often carved in pineapple and acanthus-leaf patterns.

The plainer type of Jeffersonian furniture belongs properly in the decade 1820–30, though there was an overlapping of the two types. It lacked the elegance and distinction of the carved mahogany, and the sense of grace and proportion seems to have been weakening. Quantity of material appears to have been a requirement, with wide, veneered surfaces and frank, rudimentary curves. But with all its faults, we love it. It was native American; it was our own. And not infrequently we discover a justification for our prejudice in the wonderfully grained crotch mahogany that was used on much of this furniture.

Following the chairs of Sheraton type came a sort of transition or mixed style, and then a type of chair in which the Empire influence may be traced. Roll-

ing back, continuous curves in sides, stiles, and legs, lyre-shaped splats, and occasionally brass feet, were among the distinguishing features. Some of these chairs were made of solid mahogany, some of maple and birch, and some were painted, but for the most part they were of veneered mahogany. A popular chair of the 1830–40 period had a rather heavy, curved back, a vase-shaped splat, and flat legs. The type is said to have been based upon an original in the library of Napoleon at Malmaison.

The sofas were, on the whole, more noteworthy than the chairs. The best of them were distinguished by good proportions and good workmanship. Apart from the Sheraton types, and generally following them, there were rather elaborate sofas, with carved or paneled top rails, dolphins or cornucopias on the fronts of the arms, and carved feet in the form of large lions' paws, surmounted with wings or with fruit and flowers. The curved lines of legs and arms were pleasing, and the proportions were generally good. After 1810 the sweeping swan's-neck arm became popular, and a touch of the Egyptian sometimes appeared in the feet, in the form of winged claws. Later came plainer, heavier forms, with less carving or none at all, plain surfaces of veneer, and rolling arms and backs.

American "fancy" chair of the early nineteenth century

A typical lyre-back chair made by Duncan Phyfe

Three types of American Windsor armchairs of the late eighteenth century

Library stand of mahogany, by Phyfe

A good example of the work of Duncan Phyfe, the American cabinet-maker. A drop-leaf table of mahogany

One of Phyfe's eight-legged sofas. The back panels are beautifully carved and the slight swing of the arms is most graceful. Owned by R. T. Haines Halsey, Esq.

The tables of delicate Sheraton character gave place to sewing-tables and Pembrokes with four vertical legs, often spiral, and frequently drawers with glass knobs. Another form had a central support, turned or gadrooned, and concave, tripod legs. The acanthus and pineapple carving appeared on central supports which rested on plinths supported by claw or ball feet—an elegant and symmetrical form, if not delicate. Then came heavier ones, with veneered surfaces, round, octagonal, square, and lyre-shaped supports, and plinths resting on four scroll feet.

With the passing of the Sheraton designs, the sideboard became less graceful. The body was brought down nearer to the floor. The slender legs gave place to massive, round, twisted, or rope-shaped pillars, extending to the floor, often finished with a bear's or lion's foot of carved wood or brass. This sideboard was usually long, and had three drawers beneath the top. Below these were usually three cupboards, the middle one being wider than the other two and fitted with double doors. The cupboard doors were generally paneled with selected mahogany veneering. The fronts were straight, or simply curved. The drawer-pulls and door-handles were brass or glass knobs, or brass rings set in rosettes or

lions' heads. Sometimes there was a paneled upright piece at the back of the top. Only a moderate amount of carving was employed, as a rule.

After 1820 the sideboard became plainer. It usually had four legs, turned feet, turned pillars at the front corners, deeper drawers, and a single cupboard below. A butler's desk occasionally took the place of the middle drawer.

Low chests of drawers and bureaus followed, in general, the styles of the sideboards. They were, for the most part, heavy and massive. The earlier ones had reeded or acanthus-carved columns, plain veneered drawer-fronts, and turned or claw feet. The carving was rather coarse, but effective. The plainer types followed, without carving, the side supports sometimes swelling out in flat-surfaced curves, and the upper drawers sometimes having a vertically curved front.

Writing-desks, escritoires, and secretaries followed a similar style development. Secretaries, or bookcase-desks, became more common, the broken-arch pediment, block front, and carved feet disappearing and giving place to the horizontal cornice, turned feet, and sometimes swelling curves at the sides.

Though the most pleasing four-post bedsteads were of the Hepplewhite and Sheraton types, there were

some in the Jeffersonian period that were rich, dignified, and interesting. The carving was often well executed, if somewhat coarse and overpowering. Heavy, mahogany posts were carved in forms which included the anthemion, the acanthus, laurel-leaf, horn of plenty, pineapple, and feathers, with reeding, gardrooning, and rosettes. The pineapples became especially popular after 1810. Sometimes these posts present the effect of a somewhat meaningless piling up of pineapples, acanthus leaves, fruit, flowers, and twists, like totem poles. Head-boards and foot-boards took various forms. Sometimes the posts were surmounted by a tester; sometimes not. Later forms of the four-poster are rather lacking in merit, some of them having enormous round or octagonal pillars, displaying no taste at all.

Low-post bedsteads were made at the same time, some of them with posts carved in the acanthus and pineapple patterns, and some of them in plainer design. The bedsteads of the less well-to-do were usually of maple or cherry, though mahogany, oak, walnut, and other woods were used for this type. Simple, turned posts and plain head-boards and foot-boards were commonest. After 1820 a bedstead without posts, called the sleigh-bed, came into vogue. It suggests an Empire derivation. It had a rolling

head-board and foot-board and broad, flat-surfaced legs, and was usually made of mahogany veneer.

During this period there was one cabinet-maker who was turning out a superior quality of furniture that belongs in a class by itself, and that in many ways equals the best work of Hepplewhite and Sheraton. Duncan Phyfe of New York based his designs on the Adam and Sheraton styles, later modified by the Empire influence, but he worked out a style all his own. He was a Scotchman who came to America about 1784. He later started in business in New York, and was well established by 1795. His work varied with the changing fashions and may be divided into three periods: From 1795 to 1818 the Adam-Sheraton influence was pronounced; from 1818 to 1830 Empire features are to be observed; from 1830 to 1847 Phyfe's work degenerated with the rest of American furniture and he produced the over-decorated mahogany and rosewood which he called "butcher furniture."

Phyfe's earlier furniture was fine in every way. His mahogany chairs, sofas, and tables showed remarkable design, workmanship, and finish. He had a splendid feeling for line and proportion; he was a master of the curve; he showed rare taste, restraint, and skill in carving. He employed the lyre, the

acanthus, various Adam and Sheraton forms, parallel rows of reeding, the concave leg, and other details with a masterful touch. He used no inlay, except tastefully arranged panels of the same wood. In short, Phyfe's furniture is as worthy of study as that of the great Georgian cabinet-makers of England.

After 1830 American furniture styles degenerated, and after 1840 there was no style worthy of the name. Heavy machine-made things followed. There came the fashion for rosewood and for black walnut, a Japanese and a Gothic craze, both poorly carried out, and the styles promoted by Eastlake. Within our time we have had the vogue of *L'Art Nouveau* and Mission. At last we seem to have arrived happily at the point of realization that novelty does not necessarily mean advance, and we have begun to hark back to the best elements of the past, just as the masters of the Renaissance and the proponents of every classic revival have done. The twentieth century is witnessing a marked improvement in popular taste and an encouraging awakening of appreciation of the beautiful, which may, after the war, result in something like a new Renaissance.

THE END

TABULATED DETAILS OF THE ENGLISH

Period	Reigning Sovereigns	Leading Craftsmen	Woods and Materials
English Gothic 1100 to 1509	Henry I to Henry VII		Chiefly oak, without varnish. Also elm, beech, and chestnut. After Edward IV, deal and cypress.
Early Tudor 1509 to 1558	Henry VIII (1509–1547) Edward VI (1547–1553) Mary (1553–1558)	John of Padua, architect to Henry VIII	Chiefly oak. Also beech, elm, chestnut, cherry, ash, yew, walnut, cypress, pear, etc.
Elizabethan 1558 to 1603	Elizabeth (1558–1603)		Same as the early Tudor.
Jacobean 1603 to 1649	James I (1603–1625) Charles I (1625–1649)	Inigo Jones, architect.	Same as Tudor.
Cromwellian 1649 to 1660	Commonwealth (1649–1660)		Same as Jacobean, with walnut added.
Restoration 1660 to 1689	Charles II (1660–1684) James II (1684–1689)		Walnut following oak. Some cedar, beech, ebony, and tropical woods. Cane work and upholstery.

Structural and Decorative Details	Significant Pieces
Architectural form. Carved and pierced tracery. Geometric patterns; pointed arch, trefoil and quatrefoil, wheel, rose, linen-fold.	Chests and coffers; cupboards, cabinets, armoires, credences, buffets, trestle tables, joint stools.
Gothic survivals, including the linen-fold, with the Tudor rose and Italian Renaissance details added, also the cinquefoil and tongue of flame.	Cupboards, presses, chests, ornate bedsteads, turned chairs, stools.
Freer carving with more Italian and Flemish Renaissance details. Portrait medallions, heraldic motifs, diamond and lozenge panels, fruit and foliage. Bulb or melon form on supports.	Long refectory tables, wainscot chairs, curule chairs, cupboards, massive four-post bedsteads.
More movable character; forms still rectangular. Perpendicular legs and chair backs. Carving and paneling. Turned legs, including spiral. Strap-work and scroll-work. Rounded arch, concentric circles and running figure eights. Arabesques and lunettes, semicircles filled with petals.	Turned and wainscot chairs, refectory tables, small tables including early gate-leg. Court and press cupboards.
Heavy forms, lacking grace. Turned work, split balusters.	Solid chairs with padded leather seats and backs. Plain tables. Drawers added to cupboards and chests.
Architectural note gone. Italian, French, and Flemish influence. Furniture lighter and more graceful. Elaborate pierced carving; some inlay. Scroll-work, cresting; crown and tulip.	Carved high-backed chairs, with cane or upholstery. Refectory tables, gate-leg tables. Cupboards, chests of drawers, day beds, tall clock cases.

TABULATED DETAILS OF THE ENGLISH

Period	Reigning Sovereigns	Leading Craftsmen	Woods and Materials
Anglo-Dutch 1689 to 1714	William and Mary, (1689–1702) Anne (1702–1714)	Daniel Marot, designer. Sir Christopher Wren, architect. Grinling Gibbons, carver. Jean Tijou, iron work.	Chiefly walnut; also oak, cedar, chestnut, beech. Lacquer and veneer. Inlay of beech, holly, birch, yew, pear, box, ebony, etc. Carved pear, lime, and pine. Rush seats and upholstery.
Early Georgian 1714 to 1750	George I (1714–1727) George II (1727–1760)	Sir William Chambers, architect. Thomas Chippendale, cabinet-maker.	Walnut, followed by mahogany. Some oak and other woods.
Georgian 1750 to 1800	George II (1727–1760) George III (1760–1820)	Thomas Chippendale, cabinet-maker. R. & J. Adam, architects and designers. Josiah Wedgwood, potter. George Hepplewhite, cabinet-maker. Thomas Sheraton, cabinet-maker, designer.	Chippendale: chiefly mahogany; also walnut, maple, cherry, beech. Adam: mahogany, satinwood, painted soft woods, inlay of exotic woods. Hepplewhite: mahogany chiefly, inlay of rosewood and exotics. Sheraton: mahogany and satinwood, some rosewood; painted and gilded beech and birch; fine inlay and veneering.

PERIOD STYLES IN FURNITURE—*Continued*

Structural and Decorative Details	Significant Pieces
Domestic character. French and Dutch influence. William and Mary: Louis XIV details, turned legs, often with inverted cup or bell, shaped underbracing, square cornices. Queen Anne: more curves, cabriole leg and Dutch foot, curved chair backs, fiddle-shaped splat, double-arch pediments on cabinets, etc. Less marquetry. Less carving; shell, cartouche, etc.	Variety of chairs, including roundabout. High chest of drawers followed by highboy. Lowboys, tea and card tables, escritoirs, dining-tables, bureaus, cabinets, clock cases, mirrors.
Transition from Queen Anne to Chippendale. Broken-arch pediment, urn, cabriole leg with ball-and-claw foot. Pierced splat.	Largely the same as Queen Anne.
Great variety, fine cabinet work. Chippendale: French, Gothic, and Chinese details; ribbon-back and ladder-back chairs; bow top and pierced splat; cabriole and square legs; rococo and Chinese carving. Adam: classic details, slenderness, fine proportions; urn, carved wreath, oval sunburst, acanthus, festoon. Hepplewhite: classic details; husk inlay; shield-shaped, heart-shaped, and oval chair backs; square legs and spade feet; draped urn. Sheraton: classic detals; straight lines; delicate proportions; rectangular and round chair backs; tapering, round, reeded legs, urn, vase, lyre, cornucopia, wreath, etc.	Nearly all modern forms. Chairs, desks, tables, cabinets, sideboards, dressing-tables, four-post bedsteads, sofas, bureaus, secretaries, book-cases, mirrors, clock cases, bijou pieces, etc.

TABULATED DETAILS OF THE FRENCH

Period	Reigning Sovereigns	Leading Craftsmen	Woods and Materials
French Gothic 1100 to 1500	Including Charles V (1364–1380)		Chestnut, oak, and other woods.
French Renaissance 1500 to 1643	Louis XII to Louis XIII (1502–1643)	Italian craftsmen, including da Vinci, del Sarto, Cellini, and Seralio. Simon Vouet, designer.	Oak, walnut, chestnut, etc. Some ebony. Cushions followed by upholstery.
Louis XIV 1643 to 1715	Louis XIV (1643–1715)	Charles le Brun, designer. J. Charles Berain, cabinet-maker. André Charles Boulle, cabinet-maker.	Oak, walnut, chestnut, and ebony. Also cherry, etc., gilded. Inlay of rosewood and exotic woods. Boulle inlay and marquetry. Upholstery, chiefly tapestry.

Decorative and Structural Details	Significant Pieces
Similar to the English Gothic, but somewhat more florid.	Similar to the English Gothic, but with greater variety.
François I: Italian Renaissance adaptations. Fine carving, good workmanship. Carving more open than the Italian. Style becoming less architectural. Turned legs and supports. Henri II: Added details in carving, including strap and band, pierced shield, arabesque, lozenge, cartouche. Later, shell and scroll carving, swags and garlands.	Chests, cabinets, chairs, tables, followed by sofas, divans, consoles, and other forms.
More domestic type. Stately grandeur. Renaissance survivals, anthemion, acanthus, shell, scroll, arms, victor's palm. Pedestal legs followed by curved legs. Balanced details and symmetry.	Chests, cabinets, tables, consoles, chairs, sofas.

TABULATED DETAILS OF THE FRENCH

Period	Reigning Sovereigns	Leading Craftsmen	Woods and Materials
Louis XV 1715 to 1774	Louis XV (1715–1774)	Jean Henri Riesener, cabinet-maker. Juste Aurèle Meissonnier, designer. Jean Francis Oeben, cabinet-maker. Charles Cressent, designer. Jean Antoine Watteau, painter. Francis Boucher, painter. Jacques Caffièri, metal worker. Simon Etienne and Robert Martin, lacquer.	The same as Louis XIV, with mahogany added. Chinese lacquer followed by vernis-Martin. Ormolu mounts. Upholstery of silk, velvet, and tapestry. Some cane.
Louis XVI 1774 to 1793	Louis XVI (1774–1793)	Jean Henri Riesener, cabinet-maker. David Röntgen, cabinet-maker. Jacques Louis David, painter. Gouthière, Pierre, metal worker.	Chiefly oak, walnut, and mahogany. Other woods gilded and enameled. Ormolu and bronze mounts. Tapestry upholstery. Cane; inlay.
Empire 1799 to 1814	Napoleon I (Consul, 1799; Emperor, 1802)	Jacques Louis David, painter. Percier and Fontaine, designers.	Mahogany, solid and veneered, with metal mounts. Also painted, bronzed, gilded, and enameled woods. Upholstery of brocades, silks, and velvets in strong colors.

PERIOD STYLES IN FURNITURE—*Continued*

Structural and Decorative Details	Significant Pieces
Luxurious and ornate. Rococo predominating. Paintings of pastoral, Arcadian, and amatory subjects. Curved legs without underbracing. Unbalanced details. Ribbon and lace effects, natural flowers and hanging baskets, the broken shell, the twisted acanthus, the curled endive, the flowing scroll.	Same as Louis XIV, with a greater variety of small cabinets and boudoir pieces.
Simpler forms; more grace; restraint, daintiness and refinement. Excellent workmanship. Straight lines and simple curves. Straight legs, usually round and fluted; round or rectangular chair backs; fluted columns. Classic revival; rococo dropped; laurel and oak leaf, Greek band, medallions, musical instruments, Cupid's quiver, baskets and garlands of flowers.	Chairs, tables, commodes, cabinets, bureaus, sofas, consoles, clocks, mirrors, sconces.
Imperial formality. Straight lines and primary curves. Anthemion, bay wreath, torch, eagle, fasces, bee, liberty cap, laurel branch, Greek fret and honeysuckle, winged figures, helmeted heads, trophies and weapons, lion's foot, letter N, sphinx.	Curule and gondole chairs, round and square tables, console tables, cabinets, bookcases, low-post bedsteads

PARALLEL CHRONOLOGY OF THE FRENCH AND ENGLISH PERIODS

English	French
Gothic, 1100–1509.	Gothic, 1100–1500.
Early Tudor, 1509–1558.	French Renaissance, 1500–1643.
Elizabethan, 1558–1603.	
Jacobean, 1603–1649.	
Cromwellian, 1649–1660.	Louis XIV, 1643–1715.
Restoration, 1660–1689.	
Anglo-Dutch, 1689–1714.	
Early Georgian, 1714–1750.	Louis XV, 1715–1774.
Georgian, 1750–1800.	Louis XVI, 1774–1793.
	Empire, 1799–1814.

French influence on English styles is especially to be noted as follows: Louis XIV influence on the style of William and Mary in the Anglo-Dutch period; Louis XV (rococo) influence on the styles of Chippendale in the Georgian period; Louis XVI influence on the styles of Hepplewhite, Adam, and Sheraton in the Georgian period.

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